FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL

JOHN H. PAYNTER

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FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL

FUGITIVES of the PEARL

BY

JOHN H. PAYNTER, A.M.
Author of *Joining the Navy*, or
Abroad with Uncle Sam

THE ASSOCIATED PUBLISHERS, Inc.

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DEDICATION

To the memory of those Negro mothers and fathers who, through the long night of slavery, kept aglow the torch of Hope and Faith and whose service, suffering and sacrifice were the frightful cost of Freedom, this volume is dedicated in love and gratitude.

FOREWORD

In this *Fugitives of the Pearl,* the author has accomplished much more than an interesting elaboration of an historic episode that is unique among the many notable experiences which developed during the period of American slavery. He has given us a story of heroic men and women under grueling conditions, whose adventures are not alone the pride of any particular race or group and thereby limited in appreciation to those related or concerned, but he shows the priceless value of character in human make-up which brings to fruition the nurtured ideals of all earnest and courageous souls.

The characters delineated are not unreal or quixotic. They lived and wrought and were impatient of the restraints which delayed their day of freedom. The author makes us feel in these pages how great a thing it is to be a man and how large a boon it is to all when that manhood is courageous.

The lesson of unfaltering faith, running

throughout the narrative like an unbroken, golden thread, makes real and tangible the abiding comfort and consolation which may be enjoyed through spiritual contact with the lowly Nazarene, "the man of sorrow and acquainted with grief."

To be sure, all the characters in this narrative are neither admirable nor lovable, for there is Judson Diggs, the informer; but he is taken care of, as indeed aroused sympathy and indignant loyalty sooner or later exacts its toll of all traitors. It is to be noted that Captain Drayton, too, is but a type of that not too frequent lover of human kind, who restricts not his benefactions within the bounds of race or creed but is ever ready with helping hand that the overburdened weak may enjoy their fair share of civic and social privilege. In a word, Mr. Paynter has made herewith a distinctly worthy addition to the literature of slavery days which doubtless will be widely and enjoyably read.

E. D. W. Jones.

Seventh Episcopal District
A. M. E. Zion Church.

Washington, D. C.;
December, 1930

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FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL

CHAPTER I

BLACK AND WHITE

In the years just after the Independence of the American Colonies the tide of emigration to our American shores set in strongly. Persons in every condition of life were eager to put to a test the assurance of the many advantages to be gained by a residence in the new country across the water. A spirit of adventure animated many who were of splendid birth and fortune, and among the latter who made the long voyage were two brothers, scions of a good old English family by the name of Brent. They reached this country about the year 1790. The elder, Hector, settled in Maryland and in due time became a factor in the business and political life of the State. John, the younger, located in Virginia as a gentleman farmer and owner of an extensive tract of land not far from the Washington home at Mount Vernon, which in due time became famous

for its able management as well as splendid, though modest hospitality.

Here it was the house of Brent, or that part of it which has somewhat to do with the story in hand, had its origin, for it was on this estate of the younger brother that Elton Brent was born, and some years after another boy who, for some reason which is not entirely apparent, was given the family name of John. It is fair for us to presume, however, taking due account of the freedom of relationship between master and slave in that period, that the title of these later Brents of color, to membership in the original family of that name, is founded on the ties which nature herself makes, albeit under cover of vicious practices, arising from the relationship of privileged owner and dependent chattel. Indeed the propriety and accurateness of this statement seems pretty well established when comparisons of the lineal features and physical characteristics on either side are made. In his early manhood, the resemblance between John Brent, slave, and John Brent, owner, is said to have been subject for general comment. My own remembrance of the former when he was of more than middle age, shows him a man of

large frame and fair of complexion, with features quite Caucasian and high sloping forehead. His manner was one of quiet dignity and repose.

From time immemorial the Brents had aristocratic connections. When John Parke Custis, the son of Mrs. Martha Washington by her first husband, served as aide de camp to General Washington at the siege of Yorktown, he had with him as serving man, Elton Brent, who bore his share of the hardships and privations of that period and attended him finally at Eltham, Maryland, where he died of Camp fever after the surrender of Cornwallis. Whether or not this special war service was effected by loan or purchase between the two families, the records do not reveal. Most probably it was the former, as the masters were friends and their properties contiguous. This view is made more probable since after the death of the elder Custis the faithful Elton again takes up his abode on the Brent estate.

About 1835, John Brent, being a bright, intelligent lad, was made a "free dealer." This signified the grant of the right to work for wages and exercise such freedom of action in civil affairs as did not conflict with

municipal laws governing the coming and going of persons in bondage. Through the influence of his master he was given employment as laborer in the War Department, then located in the Winder Building in Washington; and, being well trained to household service, he found remunerative use for his leisure hours in attendance upon social functions at the homes of the aristocracy of the capital.

At the age of twenty-five he had saved sufficient money to obtain his freedom by paying his master $600. The feeling of ownership originating in this purchase seems to have stimulated him to other noble efforts, for a few years later he had saved $800 which he straightway devoted to the purchase of his father, whose age and infirmities were now beginning to make themselves felt. After the manner of men, about this time he fell in love, the object of his admiration being the pretty Elizabeth Edmonson. In those days, more so than is now the case, the course of true love was often rough and attended with many hardships. Certainly in this instance, but the lover possessed the characteristics of a true knight

and allowed no obstacle to stand between him and the goal of his heart.

The family from which Elizabeth Edmonson sprang were slaves, although their father, Paul Edmonson, was a free man, his mistress having manumitted him at her death. His wife, Milly, lived with her husband by the consent of her owners, who estimated her service and value by the number of her own children she bred to be sold in the slave market. Paul secured a little place about fourteen miles from Washington, and there they established a home. One after another the little ones came to them to the number of fourteen, eight girls and six boys. With fear and trembling and constant prayers for their safety, the loving mother spent many anxious hours, for well she knew that each day brought nearer a possible period of cruel separation.

Happily, on attaining a marketable age, they were one after another hired to families around the country and the dreaded fate of being thrown into the traders' pen and drafted for the southern market, was for a time deferred. The mother in the anguish of her love and the bitter torture of her own experience, solemnly cautioned the girls

not to marry until they were free, for she would not have them endure a similar sorrow in becoming mothers of children who were not their own. The admonition of a bleeding heart was sacredly heeded, for when John Brent sought to unite himself in matrimony with the oldest of the girls he was told that in the then existing circumstances, it could not be. With rare courage and devotion, he immediately went to work harder than ever and resolved to reach this end by imitating the example of the faithful Jacob of old. To his regular income and other earnings, he now made substantial additions by sawing wood at night, so that at the end of two years he had in hand a sufficient sum to make his beloved a free woman and himself a benedict. He purchased for a home the ground at the southwest corner of Eighteenth and L Streets, northwest, now owned by his heirs, and still remembered as the spot where was organized the John Wesley A. M. E. Zion Church.

The family altar thus set up proved a source of helpfulness in circumstances of great trial and unhappiness which later on were to come to other dear ones. The little home was first established in two small

rooms on the site upon which was later built the commodious frame dwelling, which with its generous old-fashioned porch was for so many years a harbor of refuge in which a word of hope or more substantial help was never asked in vain.

CHAPTER II

AGE DISAPPOINTED BY YOUTH

THE gathering around the family board of John and Elizabeth Brent was not always a strictly family gathering, for a stranger had now come into the group in the person of a rather curious little man by the name of Judson Diggs. This person was altogether the most interesting character to be found among the entire colored population of the District of Columbia. He was in all outward forms and observances a devoted Christian. He was a factotum in general, representing the business interests of his people, both slave and free. By reason of these transactions which covered every variety of dealing from real estate to the purchase of apparel, a considerable profit had accrued to Judson, which, through personal privations and careful, not to say miserly, management, now represented a comfortable competency.

But Judson was not at all popular not-

withstanding such material advantages. Like Brother Brent, he was also a free-dealer; but, unlike that worthy and highly respected man, there were but few among all who knew Diggs—and every one did know him—who rallied to him in a friendly way. It was the general opinion that to be sought after as much as he was by the white people, was, to say the least, unnatural; and the idea was commonly current that the very best way to put the white folks "next" to anything you were about to do, was to let Judson into the secret. The women folks, while making use of his abilities in little matters of domestic economy, kept him at a safe distance, and the men held aloof in all matters in which there was no other interest than that of a purely social nature. To give the Devil his due, as the saying goes, this treatment seemed exactly what the old fellow most desired, as through this means the latches of his purse strings were seldom unloosed in personal obligations of friendship, while the effect was to confirm him in his policy of close-fisted selfishness.

For some time back Judson had been assiduous in cultivating the friendship of the Brent household. This procedure, which

was remarked as most unusual, was at first attributed to a religious impulse and a desire for congenial intercourse along this line; and although his side of the "intercourse" was almost wholly that of listener, it was taken as an evidence of his deep humility and modest disposition. For with his genial hospitality and genuine Christian impulse, Mr. Brent opened wide his doors and his arms to this recruit to Methodism, and so much at home did he become that it soon afforded matter for comment if Brother Diggs failed to drop in on any evening and take his "jest er haf er cup, ef yer plez" before the tea was ended.

Judson had been a childless widower for a number of years, and it was popularly believed that no amount of persuasion would avail to induce him to change his condition. A short while after these visits began, however, two strange things were noticed—his face and hands invariably showed unusual signs of recent acquaintance with soap and water, and a little parcel tied up in an old colored handkerchief always accompanied him. Ordinarily one might not think there was any connection between the two, but there was, and this we shall soon see.

It was the custom of the Edmonson children to "drop in" on their "evenings off" to see sister Lizzie and talk over family matters, and through this custom Brother Diggs had made the acquaintance of the two sisters Emily and Mary. One or another of the boys would always be "off" on the same night with the girls, so that they were usually sure of company on returning home. Brother Diggs invariably became restless as the time for their departure approached, and never relinquishing his hold on the little parcel, would glance at the old-fashioned clock and then furtively at the girls, until a little while after they had gone, he, too, would get up and abruptly say "good-night." It is impossible to reckon with any degree of accuracy, the number of nights this act might have been repeated, had it not been for the fact that neither of the boys put in an appearance on one evening early in the winter. Brother Diggs was on hand with face and hands in the usual condition, and the little colored-handkerchiefed parcel playing its accustomed part in the affair.

A particularly pleasant time had been passed, for the Christmas season was ap-

proaching, and all were bright with anticipation of that happy time. As the hour of ten drew nigh, Brother Diggs became restless as usual, pricking up his little ears at each footfall on the stairs and glancing anxiously at the opening door. The boys, however, did not come; and Brother Brent asked Brother Diggs: "If it ain't too much trouble would yer be so kind an' obligin' ez ter see the gals ter their do', bein' ez yer gwine summat in dat d'rection any how."

Of course, there was nothing left for Brother Diggs to do but "fall in line," and this he proceeded to do with the speech of his life as he gathered up his hat and said:

"Certiny, Brudder Brent, naw trouble 'tall, naw trouble 'tall."

Mary lived some distance beyond the home of Emily; so in order that both might have the benefit of company and that the former should reach home in safety, Emily suggested that they all go there first. This was accomplished in due course, Brother Diggs trotting along by the side of the nimble-footed girls, but never offering a word except in reply to a question to which a direct answer was unavoidable.

A very few steps had been taken on the

last part of the journey, alone with Emily, when the little parcel was unceremoniously shoved into the latter's hand with the remark:

"Here's dem cakes, Miss Em'ly."

"What cakes?" says she, for her first thought was that her sister Lizzie had intrusted something of the kind to his care for her.

"Dese cakes here," says Brother Diggs in a pleading tone of voice, "tek 'em, Miss Em'ly, do, I ben wantin' ter gib 'em ter yer dese many nights."

At this juncture Emily remembered that she had seen a similar parcel on each of the occasions when they had met at her sister's, and the idea that these cakes may have been tied up in this same handkerchief for more than two months seemed so ridiculous that she was obliged to stand still and give vent to merriment which for the life of her she could not control.

"What's yer laffin' erbout, Miss Em'ly? Don' yer nebber eat cakes?"

"Yes, I eat cakes, of course I do," said Emily, endeavoring to check the laughter which threatened to convulse her again, "but whoever heard of anybody carrying

cakes around for months and expecting people to eat them. Why, they must be hard as brick-bats."

"Dat ain't my fault, Miss Em'ly, fer yer know I nebber did hab de chance ter gib 'em ter yer befo' ternight."

Emily, who had previously had no suspicion of the true meaning of Brother Judson's curious behavior, began to see a great light. As a matter of fact, she was just beginning to feel some compunction of conscience on account of the levity with which she had met his almost childlike kindliness when Judson himself broke through all reserve and greatly agitated tried to take her arm. Emily's fingers, involuntarily relaxed under the shock of her complete surprise, the parcel dropped to the ground with a crackly thud, and she started off on a quick scamper in the direction of her home.

"Hol' on, Miss Em'ly, hol' on," cried Diggs, making a desperate effort to keep up with her, and altogether ignoring the fallen parcel, "I got sumpin' ter say ter yer."

Emily was now more startled than ever as she heard the old man's desperate tone; and as he caught up with her his small eyes

seemed in the somber shadows of the night to snap and shine with emotion of which he ordinarily seemed incapable.

"Lor', Miss Em'ly," he gasped, puffing and blowing furiously. "Yo' pretty feet goes faster den er March hare."

"Well, it's getting late," said Emily impatiently, and I must get home."

"Dat's ezy nuf," came Judson's reply, accompanied by a grating sort of laugh deep down in his throat. "Yer kin git er home any day yer wants ter," attempting at the same time to take hold of her hand. "Dere's one ready an' waitin' fer yer, an' dere ain' no mor'gige on it neder."

Emily was now so confused and angry at the sly way in which the old fellow had switched her meaning that there was a grave suspicion of tearful anger in her voice as she said:

"I didn't mean that, you know I didn't; and I don't agree with you at all, for if you are the owner, I think there is a very serious mortgage on it; and what's more you needn't go another step with me. You're a precious old rascal and nothing else."

Before Judson had fully grasped the meaning of these rapidly uttered words, the

indignant girl had started off on a brisk run and was soon far away on the road towards home. Judson stood stupidly watching the slim figure until it was lost in the surrounding gloom, and then he, too, started slowly on in the same direction.

CHAPTER III

THE BLACK TRIUMVIRATE LISTEN

It was about this time that the news of the overthrow of despotism in France in 1848 reached this country. A great celebration was planned to commemorate worthily this triumph and the onward march of the principles of freedom and universal liberty. Such was the spirit which prevailed everywhere, and the thrill of it quickened the public pulse and lifted the citizens of the District of Columbia almost to a frenzy of excitement and enthusiasm. The thirteenth day of April had been set apart for the celebration, and with the dawn were visible evidences that something of more than ordinary interest was about to happen. Later on it would seem that the entire population had poured forth and taken possession of the parks and the spacious steps of the public buildings and had distributed themselves along the entire length of Pennsylvania Avenue.

The beautiful emblem of the republic unfurled its gracious folds at every point of view. Buildings bore gorgeous decorations, drums beat everywhere, and men paraded to the tuneful strains of martial music. The very air was redolent with oratory. The high dignitaries of the land, senators, representatives and department officials bore a principal part in voicing the satisfaction with which the good news of French liberty had been received from beyond the water.

Noble souls! generous men and patriots! How peculiarly fitting their attitude! In what a grandly beautiful light do those sentiments reveal them! What noble chivalry! How broad and deep their humanity! So broad and deep that the horizon of the benefactions which they are so vigorously apostrophizing is made to extend only to the skin that is fair, with no thought of their Master's image in ebony shivering, struggling and praying in the very shadow which their inhuman blindness casts. Yet there they stand or crouch, dodging here and there on the edge of the crowd, vaguely realizing that something has happened—feeling in an unaccountable manner that the event,

this tremendous demonstration touches their condition in many ways and the more intelligent of them hoping down in their troubled hearts that the good Lord would in some way use the occasion to further their deliverance. Well might these poor creatures be bewildered and lost in the maze of such sophistries. They listened enraptured at such words as freedom, liberty, humanity; and in the same moment felt the pain of a heart which sinks like lead in their bosom, for they knew that none of these Heaven-born attributes were intended to apply to them. Can it then be considered wonderful, I ask, that the gall and wormwood of their position, the exquisite irony of the case, the gross injustice of the thing should penetrate the very fiber of their being and sting them into positive and determined action?

In the course of his remarks, the eloquent Senator Foote of Mississippi said, "It is my conviction that the happy period to be signalized by the universal emancipation of man from the fetters of civil oppression and by the recognition in all countries of the great principles of popular government, equality and brotherhood, is at this moment visibly approaching."

Among the throngs of people who listened with grave anxiety to these lofty sentiments, were Daniel Bell, Paul Jennings, and Samuel Edmonson, three colored men who, in intelligence and manly character, were rather above the average Negro of that period. The first named had purchased his freedom, while his wife and eight children were freed by their master on his death bed. The heirs of the master had endeavored to break the will by claiming that he was not of sound and disposing mind at the time it was made; and so those most affected, fearing the case might go against them, resolved to secure their freedom through flight.

Hundreds of colored people of all ages and conditions were scattered about the park, listening respectfully, indulging in whispered converse among themselves, to whom no thought was given beyond that usually bestowed upon domestic animals, which, in those days, were accorded without dispute the entire freedom of the city. Very different it was in regard to the three friends to whom allusion has been made. They were recognized as being representative of that idea which was most repugnant to the sentiments and most threatening to

the material interests of the citizen-master.

Paul Jennings was unusually intelligent; through application and without instructors he had acquired a vast amount of general information. Since he was well versed in ordinary business forms and methods, it is not strange that his advice and counsel should be sought and followed by those of his people who were less fortunately circumstanced. He was on the near side of forty, of strong physique and splendid manly presence; in fact, it were difficult to find two men, in no way related, so nearly alike as Jennings and Edmonson. The third, Daniel Bell, was of slighter stature, having a dark skin and a rather oversized head covered with heavy, coarse, black hair. The other two of this triumvirate were of lighter tints of brown, with hair that was soft and shiny.

Jennings was employed as butler by Daniel Webster and, being highly esteemed by that great man, was accorded many privileges in and out of the house not commonly enjoyed by a Negro, even though free. His superiority over his fellows was doubtless attributable, in a measure at least, to contact with this famous commoner and the unrestricted access to his splendid library. Bell

was a carpenter with a good business and, being free, hired his time, while Edmonson was also employed as butler in the home of one of the old families of the District of Columbia.

The three friends formed a little group on the outer rim of the crowd which thronged Jackson Square on this bright sunny morning about the middle of April. The White House, to the south across the Avenue, the somber-colored buildings of the State, War and Navy on the right, the Treasury on the left, with the Episcopal Church of St. John north of the Square, were the notable features of the surrounding landscape. Difficult indeed it is to imagine a situation more pregnant with inspiration to high and noble thoughts. Here truly were the tangible evidences of the solidity and power of temporal authority in splendid array, and as well the visible insignia of that Divine Essence whose perpetual throne is set up in the hearts of the children of men.

When Senator Foote had concluded his speech and the throng was giving vent to its appreciation and voicing its enthusiasm in shouts and handclappings, Bell suddenly lost sight of his own position in relation to

the event and cheered as loudly and applauded as vigorously as any one in the crowd. The other two, of calmer temper and given to weigh more closely the merit and meaning of events, took such a manifestation as highly improper and were visibly disturbed.

"Why, what are you doing, Daniel?" said Jennings, pulling him by the coat-sleeve; "anybody would think you were one of these white people, the way you are carrying on."

"That's so," said Daniel, quieting down all in a moment; "the fact is, that man made me forget my color the way he talked, and if he didn't mean it for me it sounds good to me all the same."

"You are right, Daniel, I feel that way, too," said Edmonson. "It was as much as I could do to keep from shouting, but it won't do for us to let the white people know that we realize the force of what has been said for they'll say right away "them 'niggers' need watching."

The fact is that Daniel's outburst had already attracted considerable attention, for it was a very unusual thing to see a Negro so far forget his position as to become demonstrative in the presence of his su-

periors. Finding that the occurrence was being commented upon by several groups in the crowd and wishing to avoid any trouble, Paul led the way down the street, followed by threatening glances which boded no good for them had they remained.

"Look here boys," said he, when they were safely away; "this celebration of the white folk has a mighty deep meaning. There's Senator Foote and all the rest of them rejoicing that liberty and freedom from oppression have come to people thousands of miles away, while right here under the very sound of their voices, is a race of people whom they themselves are holding in the very worst sort of human slavery. It is true a few of us enjoy some kind of freedom, but what about the others? I tell you, it's time we were thinking about doing something."

"But what can we do?" asked Daniel. "There's no use trying to fight, for they'd soon kill every last one of us, and then our families would only have a much harder time than they did before."

"Oh, no," said Edmonson; "there's surely no use fighting. You remember how Turner tried that down there in Virginia, and a braver man never lived, but it just proved

that such a course was only a way of throwing away valuable human lives and accomplishing nothing."

"Well, since fighting is out of the question, what's the matter with running away?" asked "Pap."

This drastic proposition seemed to strike the others with such force as to paralyze them on the spot. They regarded Paul with a bewildered stare for a few seconds, when Edmonson, being the first to recover, said:

"That's easy enough to talk about, but I fail to see how you are going to run off all these slaves, 'less you give 'em wings and take 'em thro' the air."

This little sally tickled Daniel immensely, and the faces of all three which were erstwhile dead serious relaxed in a hearty laugh.

"Well, I'll tell you boys I've got a plan, and I was just kinder feeling my way you know (but don't let us stop here, because it never takes white people long to become suspicious). You remember I was over in Baltimore with the Senator last month, and at the hotel where we put up, I met the Captain of a schooner, who seemed to take a great fancy to me. The night before we were to come back to Washington he told

me to come to his room as he wanted to talk to me. As luck would have it there was a big dinner given to the Senator that night, which left me free to do as I pleased. Accordingly, I watched my chance and about nine o'clock, with the coast clear (because you see I had to be careful, for I didn't know what was up and the hotel people might think it strange), I got to his room without being seen. Boys, as sure as God's my Judge, when I left that room two hours later, I was a different man. You've heard these speakers to-day talk about 'humanity' and 'freedom' and a whole lot of other things, but I tell you they don't know the first meaning of the words. That man talked to me like a brother and the tears rolled down my cheeks just as if I had been a baby. But we can't go into all that now, if the plan is to be successful we've got a lot of work to do and only a little time to do it in."

"What's that, Paul? What do you mean to say?" Paul's friends were almost out of their senses with the eagerness of their expectancy.

"Well, it's just this," Paul replied, taking a letter from his inner waist-coat pocket.

"I got this in the Senator's mail this morning, you see it is addressed in his care."

Unfolding the letter with ceremonial care he read to them in a husky whisper:—

"Dear Brother,

"I will reach Washington with Master on the evening of the 13th and would like you to come abroad the *Pearl,* at the foot of 7th St., as I have something I would like to send to mother.

"Frank Jennings."

"What if the Senator," began Edmonson at the conclusion of the letter.

"What if he had," interrupted Paul, anticipating the end of the question. Nobody can hinder a fellow from having a brother and a mother, and it's natural like for a boy to send a little something to his mother once in a while; so I don't see as any harm could be done; but the Senator happens to be away and that's all the better."

Paul waited for a moment, seemingly expecting some comment from his hearers, but they were evidently too much surprised with the whole affair and as yet could say nothing.

"Now this letter which seems to come from brother Frank," he continued, "is no

more nor less than a message from the schooner captain, and means that he will be here to-night with his ship and will be ready to take as many of us away as want to go."

"Paul! You don't mean it!" said Daniel; while Edmonson, who was more of a religious turn of mind, suddenly cast his eyes upward and gushed out a fervent "Thank God."

By this time the three friends had crossed town and come to the corner of Sixth and D Streets, in front of the old Unitarian Church, long since converted into a domicile for the Police Court of the District. Midway the block stood the fairly imposing residence from whose balconies Daniel Webster responded to ovations and serenades tendered by admiring fellow citizens. In its day this was manorial for a city residence; now progress and development have relegated it to the rank of a fourth-rate office building tenanted by semi-respectable lawyers who squeeze their living from the misery and extremity of the unfortunates who feed the adjoining courts.

Here Paul consulted a handsome old-fashioned gold watch attached to his waist-

coat by a leather guard and found it was somewhat past three o'clock.

"Now fellows," said he, assuming active command for the first time, "we must get to work. Every soul must be told and be aboard the vessel by eleven o'clock to-night. Be careful whom you trust, for if you should happen to strike the wrong person the white people will know everything and they'll soon have us all gobbled up. Get as many of our women and girls as you can, but for God's sake be careful not to tell them too much."

After a brief talk over the details of meeting, the three set out on their separate ways to advance the desperate plans upon which they were so suddenly agreed, each loyal to the muffled heart-beat of manhood long obscured but now lifting their souls on the wings of hope to view the rosy dawn of a bright and happy day.

CHAPTER IV

THINKING IT OVER

JENNINGS left his two friends and entered the Webster house, going immediately to his own little room on the top floor. The fact that the family were out of town afforded him relief from his ordinary duties and allowed a freedom of action that would have been impossible under the usual daily routine. Having speedily made his personal arrangements, he descended to the library and took a seat at the massive walnut desk upon which so many of the famous speeches of the master mind of his age had been written. The prevailing feature of the room was that of simple and inexpensive comfort; the crowded book shelves covered every inch of wall-space and gave indication of the only wealth, that of intellect, which the owner esteemed worthy and important. The heavy winter hangings were still in place. The large old-fashioned windows were thrown open wide, admitting the soft spring air,

which tempered the heat from the morning fire, which now had died down in the open grate.

Having secured writing paper from among the litter of manuscript, books, and documents which encumbered the desk, Paul sat with pen in hand, giving himself up to serious reflection on the crisis which was so near at hand. He was keenly alive to his own peculiar position in the affair, for well he knew that if the effort resulted in failure, upon his shoulders would be placed all the responsibility and censure. He was already "free" as the word went, but he had always looked upon his freedom as a sort of spurious article, unworthy of the name, with reason perhaps, as carrying only a superficial advantage over his fellows; but entirely deficient in supplying that lofty sense of satisfaction which comes with the possession of real freedom.

He knew the sentiment current among the master class that considered the free Negroes, of whom he was one as favored human pets who had more consideration than they deserved, to be petted but watched lest they become a menace to the dutiful submission and efficient service of the slaves.

The idea of "such a man as Jennings," "running off up North with a lot of slaves" would be considered preposterous. "Is he not already free himself?" would be asked; "then what more can he need?" So it is ever,—the empty shell, placed together and made to conform to reality in size and shape, is offered as a substitute for the coveted ripened fruit.

All things considered, Jennings was not long arriving at a conclusion that the course he was about to take was the just and righteous one. He considered that he owed it to himself to seek a larger field, where what ability he might possess could be of greater service in hastening the dawn of freedom, which he firmly believed must one day break its mellow radiance even over the shadowed masses of the American Negroes. Further, the cause was a noble one; he owed the effort to his people and rightly felt that it is left to those placed in exceptional circumstances to aspire to and attain the highest spheres, to blaze the way for their less fortunate brothers. Of the way the step might affect him personally, he took no thought, for he was an absolutely fearless sort of man, and would have willingly bared his breast as a

target to deadly bullets, if so the great work of deliverance might be accomplished.

One phase of his contemplated action, however, did cause him some embarrassment —in what light would his employer regard his defection and apparent ingratitude? He well knew that under different circumstances he could not desire a more pleasant relationship. He had served him now more than a year, and the association had constantly grown more intimate and confidential. Mr. Webster in his big, generous, open-hearted way had little by little seemed to lose sight of the existing conditions and the relation of his servant to him, and in all ways rather sustained the relation of a friend and patron to a faithful and intelligent servitor whose misfortune it was to be of the blood of a despised and outcast race.

To Jennings, the brilliant achievements of his employer in the realm of statesmanship, his masterly oratory and great intellect, were as much a source of pride and pleasure as if he had been connnected by ties of blood with the distinguished man. On occasions when the Senate and assembled throngs sat charmed and bewildered under his matchless eloquence, Jennings was one of the few

of the unfavored race admitted to the galleries, and never failed at the proper time to offer praise which was fittingly appreciated.

The vibrant tone of the great hall-clock, tolling the hour of four, however, rounded up the musings of our friend, who by this time had reconciled one duty with another by deciding to leave a note of explanation, which he slowly accomplished in the following terms:

"HONORED FRIEND,

"A deep desire to be of help to my poor people has determined me to take a decided step in that direction. My only regret is that I shall appear ungrateful, in thus leaving with so little ceremony, one who has been uniformly kind and considerate and has rendered each moment of service a benefaction as well as pleasure. From the daily contact with your great personality which it has been mine to enjoy, has been imbibed a respect for moral obligations and the claims of duty. Both of these draw me towards the path I have chosen.

"JENNINGS."

Placing the note on the little desk calendar, where it would not be overlooked, he left the house by way of the kitchen, where

he informed "Aunt Rachel" the cook, that he would be away for some time and admonished her to look after the house in his absence.

A number of persons whom he had thought of in this hour of deliverance lived in widely separated parts of the city. But realizing the inexpediency of employing other means of locomotion than that of his own two limbs, he immediately struck out with a stout heart and a sturdy stride to carry the tidings to as many as he could reach. Meanwhile the other two friends had not been idle, and in the same way were accomplishing the purpose upon which they were agreed. Edmonson, who was the youngest of these "conspirators," lived with Attorney Bradley in one of the houses with marble steps directly across from the City Hall.

When the three separated at the old church corner, the question uppermost in his mind, was how to get into the house and out again in the shortest space of time. He walked slowly in that direction and thought hard and fast, but, being strictly honest, and, besides, a member of the church, he found it difficult to frame an excuse that would be

both truthful and plausible. The distance was short and, realizing that hesitation was dangerous and might prove fatal to the undertaking, he persuaded himself that the object to be attained ought to justify a little trifling with the truth; so with a firm step and steady eye he sought the presence of his mistress. The desired leave was readily granted on the plea that he had received word that his mother was sick, and, stopping only long enough to put a few necessary articles in his pockets, he was soon again in the street, a trembling messenger of deliverance.

CHAPTER V

THE DISCUSSION AT THE FIRESIDE

The parents of the Edmonson children lived at some distance from the city; so the parental hearth for the older children who were hired out in the city was maintained by the oldest sister and her husband, John and Elizabeth Brent. To the former was intrusted the business of hiring and collecting the wages of the children and accounting for the latter to their owners. Their spiritual and temporal welfare were alike cared for by these loving guardians, who in all things were as solicitous of their well-being as their own parents might have been. No step was taken without first consulting Sister Lizzie and Brother John, and no pleasure or trouble was so great but that it reflected itself upon these dear faces as a smile of happiness or a sad and sympathetic tear.

The devotion of these earnest souls, however, was not spent alone on those whom nat-

ural ties drew near to them, but on all, in the measure their resources might allow; and whether sympathy or advice, food or raiment, money or an humble bed to comfort and cheer—it was freely and joyously given by spirits willing in all things to do the Master's will.

When Edmonson reached the home of his sister, night had fallen, and he found the family with curtains drawn, cosily seated about the supper table. Much to his surprise his parents were also there, having come in as they occasionally did on Saturdays for needful shopping and a visit to the children. The old folks were now at the point of hale middle age in which the sparkling eye, elastic step, and general vigor bespeak the reward of virtue practiced in early life as well as inherited strength of constitution. "Mother Edmonson" had even adopted the little white lace cap for head dress, beneath which lay the smooth black hair just streaked with gray and from under which shone a pair of mild dark eyes, lighting a face quite fair and a countenance which reflected a world of piety, tenderness, and devotion. About her shoulders and fastened on the bosom by an old gold pin, was

"Mother" Edmonson

a pure white muslin scarf which relieved in some degree the somber effect of her much brushed Sunday gown.

The husband, Paul, of massive frame and dark brown complexion was her senior by several years. His head was smooth and shiny as a ball of rare old mahogany, except for a fringe of coarse hair, not quite all gray, from ear to ear, curling down to the nape of his neck. The hardships and privations which had been his portion through life had left their mark in countless seams on his face and brow. The once sturdy and upright form was now just slightly bent, inclining itself through force of attraction and decay towards that bosom which offers a sure and safe retreat for the bruised and wearied bodies of the children of men. However seamed and bent in face and form, the outline of an indomitable spirit and an unfaltering courage were to be noticed in the square cut chin and the clear and steady gleam of his dark and deep set eyes.

With unbounded interest in the proceedings of the day the chronicle of the celebration in Washington was being rehearsed for the benefit of the old folks who had arrived too late to witness its events. Both were

deeply affected by the recital, and, though they could not have told it in so many words to save their very lives, they were deeply conscious of an undefined something which seemed to be closing in upon them like fate and touching their lives for weal or woe, they knew not which. These two, husband and wife, realized in the strength and depth of their spiritual union a truly exalted ideal. The union of soul, oneness of thought and feeling and a common, tender solicitude for the welfare of their humble hearthstone, were to them a fund of inexhaustible wealth which no run of misfortune or adverse circumstance could wholly bankrupt. A union, obscure and lowly in outer fact, but sacred in the strength of that Christian faith and hope by which the burden of the weak is lightened and the sorrowing heart is made to rejoice.

"Mother" Edmonson was talking in a calm, caressing tone of voice, sitting a little back from the table, her hands crossed on her lap and an earnest, thoughtful expression on her face.

"I tell you what, 'Honey," said she, including young and old alike in this general term of affection, "it 'pears to me that all

this noise and flurry of the white folks is entirely out er tune, fer if they want ter do something they might set their colored people free, and that would be worth while celebrating 'bout."

"I guess we'll all wait a long time for that, mother," said Mr. Brent, "for they don't do things that way. It's good 'nough for them to talk 'bout, way over yonder 'cross the water, but any poor nigger what gets his freedom 'round 'bout here will either run for it or he'll know how much he paid for it."

"You can't make too sure about that, my boy," said the old gentleman, "for nobody knows what the good Lord's got in store for his people. I don't know how it's goin' to be done," he continued, "but some how'er nother, every time I get up off'er my knees, I feel more an' more certain the time of our deliverance is drawin' near."

These words were uttered with solemn impressiveness as he leaned forward with both hands on his cane. Almost at the same moment came the sound of rapidly approaching footsteps. It was Samuel.

Something unusual was to be noticed in the appearance of young Edmonson as he

hurriedly entered the room, and taken in connection with the serious words just spoken by his father, may have been responsible for the general feeling of awe and restraint which instantly seized every one in the room. "Mother" Edmonson was the first to break the spell with a question.

"Samuel, my boy, what can be the matter? Come here and tell me. What are you doing away from your work so soon?"

"Mother," said he, "I'm running away. There are a whole lot of us going away on a ship to be free. Ephraim and Richard are going, and we want to take Emily and Mary too."

"What's that you're saying? Sit down and get your breath, boy,—and let us know what it's all about."

"All right, Mother. I'm awful glad you and father are here; and if sister Lizzie will give me something to eat, I'll tell you the whole story."

A place at table was immediately prepared for him, and although the effort to satisfy the numerous questions asked and his hunger at the same time, prolonged a small bite into a long meal, the end was reached in due time. The details and plans of the

proposed effort had to be rehearsed more than once in their general stupor of surprise and anxiety. The older folks were visibly perturbed, while a feeling of disquiet seized upon little Katie and Martha Brent and impelled them to nestle close to the side of their mother.

"My son," said old Mr. Edmonson, breaking the silence which followed. "This is a mighty serious business, an' if de 'rangements break down ther's goin' to be er lot er trouble for everybody."

But the caution of age had little discouraging effect, for young Edmonson's reply came promptly in a tone of confidence.

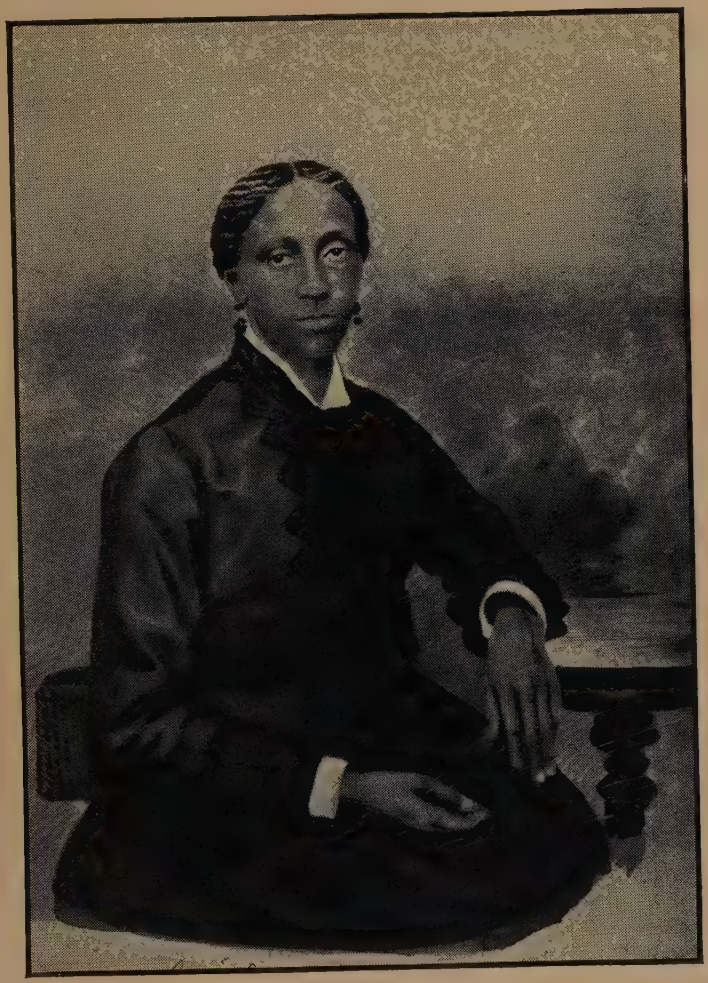
"We've got everything fixed all right, father; so don't you and mother worry. We'll take good care of Emily and Mary, and when you hear from us again we hope to be safe and free in Philadelphia."

"Mother" Edmonson had taken very little part in the conversation. She seemed to be listening and was perhaps praying with her head inclined forward. Her mother heart was appraising the risk involved and the priceless end in view. She had always believed that God in his wisdom permitted the enslavement of a portion of His children

for purposes too deep to be fathomed by the human mind. It was quite easy and perhaps natural to her to see the hand of Providence in this sudden hope of liberty in which her children were now involved.

"I knew something was up," said she finally. "I've been feeling it all along; but Sammy, my son," placing an arm around him and drawing him close, "don't be too confident, place your trust in the good Lord, and pray to him for help and strength in this time of trial."

It was now after eight o'clock and the girls had not yet arrived. Fearing they might be detained at their places of service, the brother determined to go after them. Emily was hired to an old family by the name of Ray living near the corner of 22nd and G Streets, while Mary was similarly placed on G between 12th and 13th. At the former residence he was told that Emily had gone to see her sister Mary. Upon reaching the latter place, he was informed that the sisters had gone up town to do an errand for Mary's mistress. Disappointed and anxious in the extreme, Sam knew not which way to turn. Time was passing rapidly. Eleven o'clock would soon roll 'round, and counting



Louisa Edmonson Joy

The last of the Edmonson children died in 1916.

the more than half hour needed in walking to the boat, he knew he had very little time to spare. What should he do? Thinking seriously, he stood for a while in front of the house where he had just inquired for Mary.

"If I wait here," he mused, "they may come too late; so I guess I'd better go back up town and try to find them there."

"Bless the women," he exclaimed as he started off; "they certainly make a lot of trouble, but I can't go away and leave Emily and Mary behind, that's sure."

Fate seems strangely perverse at the very times when matters of most serious import are involved. As if to set the standard of her accomplishments at the loftiest possible notch, she employs methods the results of which are often so strange as to create perfect bewilderment within the circle of their operation.

In this wise, at least, was Edmonson impressed, for hurrying back to Eighteenth Street, he found the girls had been to the homes of both of the other two sisters, Martha and Eveline, and had gone from there across to their sister Lizzie's. Arriving there, he was consoled with the positive

information that they had gone directly home, so that he was reasonably certain of finding them eventually. He tarried here only sufficiently long to listen to some last words of counsel as to the care of his sisters, and followed by the tearful prayers of the family, he again took up his nerve-racking quest.

CHAPTER VI

PREPARING FOR THE FLIGHT

At the period of which we write, a given point in the city might be reached in about half the time it would take to cover a similar distance in this year of grace 1930. The now beautiful Washington was then what might be termed a city of dots and dashes—the dwellings the occasional dots, here and there on thoroughfares, but with indifferently marked and long unbroken dashes of uneven and irregular ground spaced out between to offer facilities for pasturage or play. Where it is now necessary to cover the distance around a series of blocks to reach a given point, folks at that time went directly to their objective. So within a very few moments after leaving his sister's home at 18th and L Streets, by striking obliquely across the fields, Edmonson found himself at the side door entrance of the residence at 22nd and G, where Emily was employed.

The town clock had just struck ten, and the large old fashioned dwelling presented

a darkened appearance with the exception of the corner room of the second floor where a bright light shot its rays out into the night and the little room over the kitchen, through the half-closed blinds of which there struggled the flickering gleam of a candle. This was Emily's room, and there her shadow, moving from place to place, informed him that she was busy with some kind of preparation. He called her softly by name several times, and failing to attract attention, pitched a small clod in such a way as to allow it to drop over the top of the window blinds and strike the window pane. Almost on the instant the sash was raised and before a question could be asked, the brother gave a soft note of warning and then whispered hurriedly:

"It's brother Sam, come right down, I'm going to take you somewhere."

Emily had evidently been waiting for the summons, for almost on the instant the candle was snuffed and in another moment the latch of the gate was raised and a plump, girlish figure stepped through to the side of her brother. Taking her hand, Sam whispered a word of encouragement and then quietly and rapidly they struck off in the

direction of the State, War and Navy Buildings, the somber outlines of which stood clearly forth against a back-ground of frowning eastern sky.

"Oh, Sammy," whispered Emily clinging closely to his arm, wouldn't it be terrible if some one should tell on us?"

"Of course it would," came the reply, "but I don't think any one could be mean enough for that," said he.

"I hope not," was Emily's answer as she bravely strove to keep the pace her brother was making. "It would be a fearful blow to mother and father, and you know nothing could save us from the slave pen and the southern market then."

"That is true, sister," was the answer, "but we must have faith and pray to the Lord, for we are his children; and whatever comes, let us say as mother has always taught us, 'Thy will be done.' "

"Oh, yes, Sammy, I'm perfectly willing and anxious to go, and so is sister Mary. And it's noble and brave of you to make the attempt, and I do hope it comes out all right."

Good sister that she was, she would not say all that was in her heart, but somehow

the feeling dominant within her was one of uneasiness. However much she wished to be hopeful and encourage her dear brother by the exhibition of cheerfulness, her bosom was heavy with fear and foreboding.

Mary's home was reached in a brief space. A light shone in her room which they approached from the rear. At Emily's call she appeared for an instant at the window, and then as a precaution against noise, threw out her shoes and shortly thereafter presented herself at the gate with a bundle in her hand.

The trio now started for the ship, making only one stop at the suggestion of the brother, at a bake-shop on F Street, where they purchased five or six dozen buns and some other eatables as a sort of last emergency fund against possible hardship. Down through 12th Street they took their way, then across Pennsylvania Avenue, and out into the region beyond the old canal, known as the Island.

A slight rain was now falling, making the progress of our adventurers a little uncomfortable, but which also lessened the chances of their being detected. The long tramp over the rough and uneven roadway came to

an end at length as they had reached the waterside. There they saw the ship, the object of their most eager thoughts, a colored light displayed at bow and stern, but otherwise shrouded in mist and shadow.

Jennings and Bell had arrived at the boat some time in advance of the others. The former seemed greatly distressed because at the last moment, a very serious consideration would prevent his accompanying his friends on their voyage to the North. Too noble to do a mean or unworthy thing, especially where his employer was concerned, he had no trouble in concluding, that the honorable thing to do was to stay where he was. This disappointment and change of plan was directly attributable to the following notice or agreement in the handwriting of Mr. Webster, bearing his autograph signature:—

"March 19, 1847

"I have paid $200 for the freedom of Paul Jennings. He agrees to work out the sum at $8.00 a month, to be found with board, clothes and washing—to begin when we return from the South. His freedom papers I give to him; they are recorded in this District.

"Signed:
"Daniel Webster"

More than two years must yet elapse before the full amount could be worked out, and Jennings felt that even in the interest of so important a matter as the freedom and welfare of his friends, he would not be justified in thus seeming to take advantage of Mr. Webster's absence. He waited on the vessel until the Edmonsons came aboard, and after explaining the situation, he reluctantly returned ashore.

CHAPTER VII

ABOARD THE VESSEL

As they crossed the gang-plank, the Edmonsons were closely scrutinized by a man in a service coat and hat with brass buttons. He flashed a lantern in their faces to satisfy himself of their right to passage and bade them welcome. They were then given in charge of a deck hand who immediately conducted them below. Most of those who had been let into the secret were so anxious to make a dash for freedom under such providential auspices that they were already aboard, and our friends now found themselves in the midst of these to the number of seventy-seven.

The other three brothers, Richard, John, and Ephraim, had been aboard long enough to become familiar with their surroundings. They joined their sisters and brother immediately and led the way to a little cleared space forward, where they had placed two boxes for use of the girls so that they might

have a little air from the two small port holes on either bow. The scene of which they were now a part was so extraordinary as to command their deepest interest and attention. A suppressed buzz of whispered talk floated through the heavy atmosphere. The place was lighted by two lanterns which confined their feeble rays within a small radius, leaving the remoter parts, as well as the motley throng, in a half light of gloom and shadows. Old men and young men, old women and young women, their bosoms the theater of conflicting emotions that found expression in restless movements and a flickering show of hope and fear following each other in fitful gleams of calm and cloud on face and feature.

Seated on the boxes, Emily and Mary had an arm around each other's waist, talking in tones of quiet earnestness. The brothers stood about them exchanging views on the outcome of the venture, seeking to brace the troubled spirits of the girls with words of trust and hopefulness. Shortly before midnight was heard on deck an unusual stir which sent a thrill of terror through the anxious minds of those below. The brothers had gone to another part of the ship to look

after their sleeping quarters; so that deprived of this comforting presence, little Emily and Mary crept even closer to each other and softly breathed a prayer for further strength and protection. It was soon apparent, however, that nothing more serious was transpiring than the usual noises incident to getting "underway," shuffling feet and the continued sound as of moving heavy rope, and the clanging ring of ponderous chains.

In the emergency and extreme hazard of the undertaking, the discomforts of the situation counted for naught. Although wearied from excitement and the strain put upon their energies in making ready for flight, none as yet had felt inclined to slumber. To this band of human beings denied the rights of life and happiness their overcrowded and ill-smelling quarters were but a necessary evil which must be endured for a while, for their faith gave promise that just a little way beyond they should all enjoy the delights and blessings of freedom. The good ship, with some straining and creaking, was soon maneuvered from the wharf into mid-stream, and through a mist, almost impenetrable, feeling the way with greatest

care, she was hauling ahead slowly but surely under the influence of a tiny foresail. The hatches were now uncovered, permitting an ingress of fresh air, and with it a greater liberty of voice and limb. The situation was now much more tolerable.

In this undertaking, moreover, religion comes to the rescue. The makeup of the Negro as a people is strong in the religious instinct, stronger in that direction perhaps, than in any other; and in that one particular, stronger than that developed in any other race. In seasons of great calamity or distress, the peoples of the earth, each and all, have their own particular "Rock" that is higher than they, to whom they flee precipitately the moment their own small powers are overreached. This to them is a sort of court of last resort to be approached with all the familiar accents of petition and seeming adoration, when all other sources of relief have been exhausted. Against the cold, selfish, and utilitarian scheme of Anglo-Saxon religion, the simple faith and trust of the poor, despised Negro in the reality, efficacy, and power of the Redeemer of mankind, stands unmoved and unchanged. Hardship, persecution, and suffering seem to have been

a trinity of forces welding him eternally to the Cross of Christ. The Negro's religion is not a mere hobby; neither is it a dream, but a tangible, living source of consolation and of future hope.

With this in mind, it will not seem strange then, that as soon as the movement of the vessel had become regular the whole of that little band of fugitives were upon their knees, lifting up their hearts to a throne of grace through words of whispered prayer. An old man and woman, bowed and broken by the accumulated burden of years and sorrows, overcome with gratitude at what seemed the near approach to a realization of their life's desire, dropped with one accord on bended knees. An awesome silence fell immediately; and like a placid brook that once disturbed by outward influence is broken by wave-rings of ever widening proportions so did this mass of people, circle after circle, follow the example of this venerable couple.

The two sisters, Emily and Mary, religiously devout since earliest childhood, were deeply affected; and as they proceeded with the crude facilities at hand to make themselves comfortable for the remaining

hours of the night they seemed to feel their spiritual strength renewed and made sufficient for the trials which might still await them.

At eight o'clock next morning, the *Pearl* after creeping along all night, had only reached a point a little below Alexandria. When this became known among the fugitives a great alarm was felt, for very rightfully they considered the distance separating them from their owners was all too small. A conference with the officers of the ship was necessary.

Daniel Drayton, the captain of the vessel, was a native of New Jersey, who had spent several years following the water. He had risen from cook to captain in the wood-carrying business from the Maurice River to Philadelphia. Eventually he engaged in coast traffic from Philadelphia southward. He seemed to have drifted quite naturally from strong humane impulses, intensified by an old-time spiritual conversion, into a settled conviction that the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man was a reality and that it was his duty to do what he could to assist those in bondage.

Later his voyages had carried him into

the Chesapeake Bay and thence up the Potomac. His first successful effort to assist the slaves was made on an earlier trip when he agreed to take away a woman and five children. The husband was already a free man. The woman, under an agreement with her master had more than paid for her liberty; but when she asked for a settlement, he had only answered by threatening to sell her. The mother and five children were taken aboard at night and after ten days were safely delivered at Frenchtown, where the husband awaited them.

Captain Drayton called several of the more intelligent of the men into his cabin about this time and talked with them concerning their undertaking and future prospects, should success attend them. He sat on the edge of his mess table with a foot on the seat of a chair while the others stood about in attitudes more or less awkward and listened attentively to what he should say to them.

"Friends," he began, "I want to say just one or two things to you. You see we haven't made as much progress as I had hoped for, but even at that it seems to me we ought to be pretty safe from harm, unless

something very unusual occurs. Had the weather been more favorable, we should now be nearing the open sea instead of being still here almost under the shadow of the city.

"Now you must have stout hearts and keep the women folks cheered up; and if all goes well, Monday night ought to find us tied up all safe and snug at Arch Street wharf. There are friends there who are expecting you and who will see that you are comfortable until your future has been in some way provided for."

The speech of the Captain was reported to the others with many additions, both of thought and utterance, for the imagination of his hearers had been given full play so that what was purported to be the fact would scarcely have been recognized by the Captain as his modest little speech. However, the report was eagerly commented upon and the encouraging words did much to strengthen the hopes of this band of sad and weary fugitives.

CHAPTER VIII

ON THE WAY

A BRIGHT morning succeeded the miserable and oppressive weather of the night before, and, in place of fog and damp, sunshine and warmth prevailed. A good stiff breeze was also coming out from the northwest, which was welcomed as a splendid opportunity for retrieving a part of the time lost during the recent calm.

Captain Drayton, keenly alive to every advantage, clapped on all the sail the little craft would stand. She responded in splendid shape, and sped away with a bound and toss, bearing its cargo of precious, anxious freight towards the open sea and freedom's world beyond. The outlook, which now seemed so full of promise was not without a perceptible influence on the folks below deck. They had not the evidence of vision with which to lift the mercury of their hopes, but the recognition of changed conditions was for them a sort of process of absorption,

as on ship board one unconsciously becomes a sort of human barometer, reflecting changes of the elements as well as the progress and handling of their ship.

Notwithstanding the feeling of buoyancy which was now evident on every hand, there was one who could not overcome a fear that all would not end as they wished. This was little Emily, who with her sister, was conversing quietly and taking no part in the general rejoicings.

"Sister," she said, "I had another one of those unaccountable dreams last night; only it was more real, as much so indeed as are all these noisy people about us now."

"Oh, tell me dear, was it a good dream and do you think it means joy or sadness for us?" asked Mary with eager accent.

"Of course, I cannot tell as to that," was Emily's response, "but I will tell you what it was. You may form your own opinion.

"I thought you and I had left home and with Samuel was wandering about in search of a place which under the name of Happy City had been described to him as a place of constant delight. It seemed to me we had been journeying for many months and were foot-sore and weary, when at a dis-

tance and on a lofty highland there appeared before us countless beautiful houses, glistening in white and gold and set in a grove of magnificent elm trees. Encouraged for the moment by this attractive vision, we forgot our stiffened limbs and aching feet and, taking each the other's hand, we bounded ahead with happy hearts and laughing voice.

"Coming nearer, we had our ears filled with the sweetest melodies in which were distinguished the familiar voices of joyous childhood and the thrilling quiver and ripple of merry birds vying in tones of the most exquisite harmony with the mellow sound of flute and harp. Eagerly we hurried forward, our hearts atune and senses ravished by this orchestra so strangely composed and so bewildering in its melodious charm and sweetness.

"We seemed to have approached within a few yards of the outer limits of this circle of enchantment and were preparing to gain its Edenlike attractions by one bold dash, when, in an instant, we were amazed and horrified to find this distracting fantasy, rising, rising and gradually dissolving in the gray mists above, while a gulf of riotous fire and flames, climbing and tumbling, writh-

ing, seething, and hissing with the fury of demons, yawned hideously on the spot where it just had been.

"The horror of the situation was in no sense lessened by seeing across this fiery pit, looking towards their children with outstretched arms and faces showing infinite misery and compassion, the forms of our dear mother and father. Crazed with an anxiety to reach them, we were about to cast ourselves forward when I was awakened by a heavy lurch of the ship to find myself sobbing and violently trembling."

Mary was deeply impressed by her sister's vision, which with its thread of pathos and tragedy binding in fatal folds the lives of those most dear to them, was told in tones of scarce suppressed emotion. At the conclusion both girls were weeping quietly while Mary had dropped her head forward on her sister's shoulder.

"Oh, I hope this does not mean any further evil for us," she murmured, lifting her head; "and perhaps, if dreams go by the contrary, as some say, it may mean success and happiness instead of misery."

"I truly hope so, Mary," was the prompt reply; "but," said her sister with an audible

Mary and Emily Edmonson

sigh, "it is always well, to be prepared for the worst."

"Then you do think this is a bad sign, do you not, dear sister?" asked Mary earnestly.

"I am afraid so, dearest, for, aside from that, ever since brother Samuel came for us I somehow have not been able to shake off this feeling of impending danger; but whatever comes," she added, "we will be brave, for I know the Lord is with us and that He will keep us from all harm."

A short religious service for which the Captain's consent had been asked was now begun, and the half hour before the mid-day meal was passed in singing songs of praise in softened tones and listening to words of Scripture reading by one or another of the younger folks of the company. But while we are with our little band of fugitives we must not forget the situation from which they were fleeing or the reactions their sudden going left behind.

CHAPTER IX

CONSTERNATION BEHIND

BETWEEN the gathering of the populace in the public square and the embarkation of our band of fugitives an irrevocable step had been taken. The masters who had been bereft of their human property were almost speechless with consternation. Such a thing had never been heard of since the plucky effort of Nat Turner and his associates in Virginia. The dawn of Sunday morning when it was expected that each household would witness the return of its absentees, brought only concern, vexation, disappointment, and outrage. Messengers were dispatched in every direction so that a knowledge of the general loss was current in a very little while.

A consultation of leading citizens was hurriedly held and the adjournment of an excited session of the outraged citizenry was signaled by the noisy clamor of church and fire bells, calling the male populace to arms and to pursuit. A posse numbering

not less than a hundred men, some of them owners, others impelled only through a feeling of sympathy with the master sentiment, gathered in short order in the vicinity of the City Hall. The utmost excitement prevailed, and a number of trained dogs intermingled their yelping with the stamping of well-bred horses impatient for the start.

A man of middle age, of massive frame, full florid complexion and flowing, iron-gray beard, seemed to have the general direction of affairs. Upon his order the party divided itself in four sections, and upon the further order to move, took as many different roads leading northward into the country. The detachment headed by the gentleman just described, proceeded directly north through Fifth Street on a brisk trot and had not yet passed the dwellings farthest removed from the point of starting, when by the direction of the leader, the cavalcade was brought to a sudden halt. They were then in the vicinity of what is now known as P Street in a neighborhood where houses were scarce and the view but infrequently broken by small one-storied dwellings.

As soon as the clatter of hoofs was stilled, the reason for the unexpected halt was immediately apparent. There to the left, enveloped in a cloud of dust and moving towards them slowly, was a mule, a wagon, and a man, the mule bucking and kicking after every few yards, the wagon woefully dilapidated and giving signs of speedy collapse, while the man, standing with both feet braced against either side, laid a heavy black whip onto the back of the mule, yelling at the top of his voice.

Cartwright scented a clew. The driver of the mule cart was no other than Judson Diggs, commonly called Judd. He and his mule, Cæsar, which was most appropriately named, had at least three characteristics in common: each was short, stout and stubborn, and the resemblance was furthermore emphasized by a certain physical conformity, which had its focus in a straggling growth of mixed gray hair, just beneath the line of the chin.

After considerable persuasion, Judson succeeded in urging Cæsar to come within a few feet of Cartwright, and puffing and blowing from his recent exertion, said:

"I thought that was you, Boss; 'deed I

did, kase dere ain't nobody roun' erbout here dat kin hol' er can'le ter yuh when yuhs on hossbeck."

Cartwright was considerably irritated by what he considered an unwarranted delay and paid but little heed to these words of flattery. Knowing, however, that the man was intimately associated with some of the runaways, besides that as drayman for many families he enjoyed exceptional opportunities for learning what was going on, he had concluded from the first to find out what Judson knew about the matter in hand.

"Well, Judson," said he, smiling pleasantly, "I suppose you know all about these fine doings your friends have been up to."

"'Deed, Mr. Cartwright," was the answer, "I don' know nothin' erbout no fine doings, but I know dis: dem niggers better had er staid where dey wuz an' got dere three good meals er day an' no 'sponsibilities."

Cartwright's eyes sparkled and an answering look of intelligence flashed from one to another of his followers, while Judson, perceiving the impression he had made, threw the long, black whip with a stinging

crack on to Cæsar's back. This act elicited a series of kicks, most properly, for the old creature was really standing very quiet now in an attitude of dejection with his head humbly bowed between his forelegs.

This little mule play seemed to place Judson on easy terms with himself and his surroundings, and after the general merriment had subsided and Cæsar had once more resumed a position of dejected humility, it was easily to be seen that the old man's information keg was on tap to the utmost draining.

"What you doin' wid all dese gemmens on hossbeck, Mr. Cartwright?" he asked, throwing his head to one side and winking both eyes in a manner meant to be sly.

"Why we were just about to take a little ride into the country to see if we couldn't find some trace of our missing property," was the quiet response.

"Well," answered Judson with a broad grin, "that 'pears mighty funny to me, kase when I wants ter trace any body, I tries ter go de same way dey do. But here's you goin' all 'roun' Robin Hood's barn, an' I s'pose yer ten' ter enter at de back do' by an' by an' sorter take 'em by s'prise."

"Oh, no," said Cartwright, "the fact is

we are without a clew and will be glad if you will be good enough to put us on the right track."

Judson seemed to hesitate and struck several attitudes indicative of thoughtfulness. Finally he pulled himself together and spoke.

"Well, Boss, I tell yer dis, dere ain't no use er yer goin' into de country, kase dey ain't no mo' gone into de country den I is."

Increasing interest in an anticipated disclosure of vital importance had so worked upon Cartwright's followers, that they involuntarily urged their horses closer and were now formed in a solid ring, with the two speakers mounted as heretofore for a centerpiece.

The feeling indeed was so tense that without waiting for their leader's initiative several of the horsemen asked in chorus, "Which way have they gone, then?" while from others came in threatening tones, "Make the darky tell." "Let's take him to the Lock-up." "Yes, don't let him play with us in this way."

All of this had the desired effect on the shifty little old fellow in the center of the group. With a wave of his hand, Cart-

wright suppressed these outward signs of impatience among his friends, and then more harshly than he had spoken before said to Judson:

"Now, if you've anything more to say on this matter, say it quick, and be careful that you tell only the truth, for this affair is a serious one and somebody's going to suffer before it's all over."

" 'Fore God, Boss," came the instant reply, "I ain't goin' to tell yer no lie, kase I's mo' anxious den you is ter see 'em ketched. Now dem harses is all right on lan', but dey ain't no good on water, an' I specs dem niggers is a hunnerd miles down de riber by dis time if dey's ery one."

The evident candor of this statement of Diggs, with a belief in the sincerity of his wish that these poor fugitives might be apprehended, though they could scarcely realize such treachery, was apparent to all. Without further parley, each horseman as though acting upon an order from the leader, wheeled about, and the next moment Cartwright and his followers were speeding away under whip and spur in the direction of the river. A person happening in the vicinity of this recent conclave at the mo-

ment of its sudden departure, unacquainted with the circumstances, would certainly have been amused and probably would have suspected seriously the sanity of the only actor left on the scene. But a curious transformation had taken place in the general appearance and demeanor of Judson Diggs. The cloak of cringing servility and slavish fear, so recently worn in the presence of his masters, was thrown aside even before the sound of hoof-beats began to grow faint in the distance. With one bound he leaped to the ground at Cæsar's head, and taking that worthy by his two long ears executed a series of leg gymnastics and ended the same by jumping high in the air and laughing till he grew weak from the effort.

Cæsar bore his part in the affair as though quite accustomed to his master's actions and when released only shook himself thoroughly and with blinking eyes settled down to his usual attitude of humility. When Judson had finally composed himself, he took his place in the cart, gathered up the reins and with a flourish and crack of the whip high over his head said:

"Gee up, ole boy, I guess we's evened up things wid dem high an' mighty niggers, an'

p'raps dem boys will wish dey'd paid dat two bits fur cartin' dere box down ter de wharf, too. Gee up, mule, gee up! An' I guess dat will hol' Miss Emily, too."

Upon making inquiry at the river front as to the vessels which had left port since the previous afternoon, the pursuing party learned that the schooner *Pearl* had disappeared mysteriously during the night. An investigation at the office of the shipping authorities revealed the further fact that she had not cleared in the regular way and that she had not been expected to leave for several days.

A hurried consultation was held and the conclusion reached that the circumstances were sufficiently suspicious to justify the attempt to overtake her. Accordingly, the first boat at hand was pressed into service for this duty. The steamboat *Salem* was tied up near by with fires banked. The captain was aboard. What could be more providential? About two o'clock the party, with two officers of the City Council, steamed away down the river, determined to bring back the fugitives, dead or alive, as well as those who had aided and abetted their flight.

CHAPTER X

SLOW PROGRESS TO FREE SOIL

THE progress of the *Pearl* and its human freight, seeking to reach the wide waters of the open sea, continued steady but slow. Captain Drayton and his two companions anxiously watched the fleeting clouds, seeking the first signs of a freshening breeze to bear them more swiftly beyond the possibility of capture, for well they knew the risk they had incurred in so rash but noble an undertaking. The early hours of fog and chill had merged into an afternoon of sunny brightness, and at the close of this Sabbath day a beautiful twilight, which seems so typical of the peace with which nature delights to clothe herself, descended over river and shore and the far-reaching hills.

The welcome shadows of night at length enveloped all and at the earliest moment advantage was taken of the fact to afford a breath of air and exercise to the weary pilgrims who had been strangers to these

delights for more than twenty hours. The little group of friends with whom we are best acquainted soon made their way on deck. Most of them had borne the confinement and stifling atmosphere wonderfully well, but a few of the weaker ones were visibly affected and two or three were in a state of almost complete collapse.

Among the latter was Mary Edmonson. Always delicate of body, with instincts of mind and heart tender and refined, and unaccustomed to hardships of any character, the ordeal of these terrible hours had been a bit of untold agony, mitigated only by the watchful, loving care of her sister and brothers. Samuel it was who took her in his strong arms and bore her up the hatchway and placed her on the coats which the others had spread for her comfort. She rested here for a while perfectly, her back against the foremast, her eyes closed wearily, and head on Emily's breast. A spoonful of brandy from a flask, which had thoughtfully been included in their little store of provisions, proved most helpful, and after a few moments more of breathing the pure, fresh air, the poor girl became more cheerful.

Samuel, who never ceased to blame himself as the chief cause of his sister's grief and discomfort, was especially pleased at this turn in her condition, while Emily hovered about her sister with all the concern and fond attention of a mother, responding to her slightest movement and ministering to her needs to the limit of their scant resources.

Seeing the two girls, so different, the one with rounded form, replete with grace and a face whose strong character lines seemed smoothed and softened by the light of unselfish kindliness which shone in her fine dark eyes, the other resembling more some frail, sweet flower whose delicate beauty breathes an inspiration for good to all mankind and is earth's most potent benediction, a person might wonder at their close relationship. With these dear sisters, their first and strongest point of resemblance found its expression, as indeed it did with all the children of Paul and Milly Edmonson, in their firm and abiding faith in the principles of Christianity. Hardship and suffering combined were powerless to move them from this faith. For it was this simple faith of the poor slave mother which had

been whispered with trembling tones into the uplifted hearts of her little ones, teaching them that no real harm may come to them so long as they do the will of their Father in Heaven. Can there be wonder, then, that the offspring of such stock as makes up the vast majority of the Negro Race of America should have raised the Cross of Christ to the foremost place in the horizon of their zeal and aspirations? More than this, is it even probable that all the processes of oppression conceived or yet to be conceived in the fertile brain of dominant humanity, can avail to stay the coming of their day of freedom and the ultimate glory of their triumph?

When the two girls had been made comfortable, Samuel, leaving Richard to care for them, slipped away to return with a little repast of tea, crackers, and potted meats, which proved a more than ample feast in their state of mind which took little thought of food and raiment.

At the conclusion of the frugal meal, Mary folded her hands in her lap and smilingly said, "I wonder what mother's thoughts are to-night." To which Richard

who was quiet and given little to talking responded:

"That is not a hard question, Mary, she is thinking of us, to be sure."

"Oh, yes, I know that," came the quick reply; "but brother, how worried and anxious she must be, for it is the first time in our lives that she does not know where we are and how we are situated."

"That is so, sister," said Emily, "but she is consoled by the thought that we are all together, and she knows too that no harm will come to us by our own seeking."

"Yes," came Mary's reply, as with a fond look of confidence she took her sister's hand in both her own. "It might be much worse with us. Doubtless the good Lord has His own purpose in leading us to take this step; so whatever comes I shall try and not be weak any more, but do all I can to help accomplish His will."

"That's a dear, good sister," said Emily, embracing her. "I am sure the Good Father will never put more on us than we are able to bear, and you know He suffered so much for all His people, and perhaps this is one of the links in a great chain of events

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He is forging for the deliverance of His poor children."

"That's just what I believe," said Samuel earnestly. "Although we may suffer hardships for a while, it is bound to come out right in the end."

While this little scene was in progress a decided change had taken place in the weather. The little vessel, which had been sailing along smoothly though slowly, had now taken on a quite perceptible rise and fall, the effects of which were easily apparent in the discomfort of a number of the women-folk and children. The shades of night had fallen and the heavy darkness seemed intensified by contrast with the faint glimmer of the navigator lights, fore and aft the ship, while over all the stars shone brightly, and there, stretching far out to either shore, were whitecapped breakers chasing each other with a splash and roar. A strong wind had also come up out of the northwest, and with sails distended the little craft responded to its force, and with a graceful dip to leeward bore swiftly on towards the open sea.

In a short while the deck was again clear of all save those belonging to the ship's

company, as the fugitives, unaccustomed to the sea, soon discovered that the lower deck, in the growing state of disagreeable weather, offered a much greater degree of comfort. These conditions, so favorable to increased speed, were thoroughly appreciated, however, by all on board; but to the Captain and those associated with him in the management of the vessel, there was another side to the equation which was yet unsettled. That question with all its serious import, agitated their minds.

"If the gentle Potomac, sheltered by rising shores on either side, had been thrown into such a frenzy of passion by the influence of wind and tide, how unruly, then, must be the waters of the great ocean beyond."

About nine o'clock they had reached a point in the vicinity of Cornfield Harbor, but just as matters seemed most propitious for an effectual and speedy run, a heavy squall struck the ship and did such damage to the sailing gear as to make its successful handling in such weather and with a scarcity of deckhands a rather difficult matter. They were then about forty miles from the mouth of the river, and at the rate of

speed possible in their crippled condition the open sea could only be reached about three o'clock next morning. Indications were that outside was raging a violent storm into which it would be dangerous to venture with any but the stoutest and most sea-worthy craft. As much as the Captain disliked the thought of delay, prudence dictated it as the only course to pursue; accordingly the little vessel was "brought to," and a run made for the harbor, where anchor was dropped about 10 o'clock.

CHAPTER XI

THE HALT IN THE STORM

As may be imagined, a genuine feeling of disappointment was experienced when the rattle and rumble of the chain, as the anchor dropped overboard, told the anxious folks below that their voyage had suddenly halted. The captain was at some pains to explain the reason therefor, affording some degree of consolation which was readily acquiesced in as the best possible action under the existing circumstances. He promised, however, to be away at day-break and hoped by pressing into service every stitch of canvas to recoup as far as possible the time lost during the night. And so, weary of spirit, struggling bravely to keep aflame one flickering spark of hope, the little band of unhappy slaves took what comfort they could among themselves with that faculty of resignation, so abundantly developed in Negro lives, and calmly awaited the issue.

Meanwhile, stealthily, remorselessly, and

as swiftly as steam and tide could bring her, there bore down upon them the pursuing vessel. Eager eyes with powerful glasses swept the dark expanse with straining vision, seeking with a zeal worthy of a better cause, to claim the honor of first sight of the fugitive ship. At length the eye of one keener than all the rest seems to have reaped the reward of vigilance, for there, at some distance to the west, standing out like a thick dark cloud against the gloom of the neighboring shore, appeared an object which inspired suspicion and evoked an expression of feeling that is with difficulty restrained within the bounds of prudence.

The word is passed from one to another, and fifty pairs of eyes are now intently peering towards the one shadow, blacker than all the rest, standing out distinct, yet inevitably a part of the surrounding darkness. No tell-tale lights are visible, no sound of life or movement bridged the distance, yet none there were who doubted the identity of that yet shapeless mass, to which they now drew nearer, with each engine throb and noisy roar of passing wave.

Nearer and still nearer she gradually draws, while, as if to shield more effectually

the approach, the elements seem to lend their aid in an excess of windy violence; and now with each revolution the point towards which their course is making, seems to take a more definite shape; for, rising and sinking with each wave of the turbulent waters is seen the grayish painted hull of the *Pearl*. A moment more, and two masts are easily discernible. The discovery of the broken top-mast immediately follows, and banishes the last lingering doubt as to the identity of the vessel.

The run alongside is accomplished without detection and at a given signal, a score of men clamber over the side. The officers, Sayres, Drayton and English, confident in their immunity from pursuit and wearied from long watching since the preceding night were slumbering peacefully in the cabin. All at once a sound which rises far above the whistle of the wind and surge and roar of the angry waters, falls upon their startled ears like some dread knell of doom; for an instant stops the warm blood in its course and forces upon their scarce-wakened consciousness, the fact that all is lost, that the bitter portion of failure with all its dreadful penalty must be theirs to the

dreary end. With ever increasing volume there are hurled back and forth on the rushing wind, the wild huzzahs as of a hundred voices.

"We've got 'em! We've got 'em!" rang throughout the ship from stem to stern, inspiring a panic of wildest fear among the women and children below and filling with the strange, dull pain of disappointment even the hearts of the bravest of the men. A perfect frenzy of hysterical weeping, praying and fainting among the former follows, while the men desperate and courageous, ready to fight and die if needs be for their protection and liberty, realize their utter impotence, for without arms or means of defense of any kind, they are indeed at the mercy of their captors.

Almost simultaneously with their cries of exultation, squads were formed to cover every part of the vessel. The cabin and hatchways were first looked after. The former, surrounded by a cordon of armed guards with Cartwright at the door, demands surrender. Meanwhile the hoods of the hatchways, leading to the fugitives' retreat, were drawn over and carefully secured. A number of the men of the board-

ing party, carried away by the success of the chase and their intense hatred for the men whom they held responsible for the "villainous attempt," were loud in their cries for summary vengeance.

"Hang them to the yard arm," "Shoot the rascals," and such drastic propositions were heard on every hand.

Wiser counsel, inspired by the leader and supported by the constables, whose civil authority commanded a degree of respect, is allowed to prevail, and in another moment the captives are marched forth, covered by a score of guns, and without protest offer their wrists for the shackles which await them.

Cartwright next ordered the hatches to be uncovered, and the men fugitives to come on deck. The excitement of the moment incident to this startling turn of affairs, has in no way abated on the deck below. The Edmonsons and their immediate associates, on whom most heavily rest the burden of disappointment and dismay, are perplexed by doubt and indecision. What can they do? What shall they do? Some, more reckless than all the others, counsel fight—even though it be in the face of certain death. Sam-

uel and a few others are of that mind, while Ephraim, Richard, and John are in opposition, as might be expected from older and more experienced heads.

Emily and Mary plead tearfully and eloquently for prompt and complete submission, the former clinching her argument with the assertion that to fight would be just what their captors desired most, as it would afford opportunity for all kinds of cruelty and perhaps murder; besides, she concluded, with a tone of conviction and prophecy:

"This is all a part of God's plan for our deliverance and to take such a course would look as though we had lost faith in His promises."

This counsel, given in fervent and impressive tones, won almost every one to a course of quiet resignation, imparting some of Emily's own implicit faith to those less firm and trusting. Richard, the senior of the captive crowd, led the way on deck, followed closely by Ephraim, Samuel, and John in the order named. Just as they reached the top of the steps, Ephraim jumped several feet, landing in the midst of a squad of his captors and shouted at the

top of his voice: "Do yourselves no harm, we are all here." These words, which were first uttered by the Apostle Paul to console and reassure his frightened jailers, had now a most unlooked for effect.

Ephraim was young, muscular and of splendid proportions, and seeing him thus by the poor light of several smoky lanterns, with flashing eyes and swinging arms, leaping into their midst, followed by others whose numbers were unknown, some of Cartwright's men were overcome with a feeling of terror and dropped their guns and scurried away to find shelter among the dark shadows of the ship. By the time the others reached the deck the shock of Ephraim's strange appearance had somewhat worn off, and at the moment they stepped out of the hatchway, a sharp blow, which but for a sudden lurch of the vessel would have laid him low, took Samuel on the side of the head and by glancing spent its force against the back of John.

The three prisoners who were witnesses of this incident were so horrified to think that these poor creatures might be brutally murdered, without having so much as a penknife with which to defend themselves, that

despite their own misfortune, they bravely protested. But for this timely interference there is little doubt that one or more of these poor fellows would have been ruthlessly slaughtered. The true condition of affairs, however, was soon recognized, and it was obvious that there was nothing to fear in the way of resistance from the slaves. Quiet soon evolved from the general chaos, and orders were given looking to an early start on the return trip to the city.

CHAPTER XII

HOPES BLASTED

THE most cherished hopes of life are often blasted, and the stream of progress that has seemed to bear us onward is checked, turned backward, violently it may be, by a tidal wave of cruel and opposing force. Yet, how else, were it not for these same evidences of a perverse fate, might mankind hope to rise to that high plane upon which noble lives are lived: sorrow, suffering, disappointment and their kindred ills are rounds in the ladder of experience by which we climb with persistent grip and tireless, steady tread, and from some bright eminence streams down a radiant influence to mark the upward way for frail and less determined brothers.

How near indeed would a blessed Arcadia be, could we but truthfully say, the great majority of our human kind are of such nobility that:

Though fettered by unhappy circumstance,
They stand enthroned on lofty height,

Which is never won by fate or chance;
Nor held secure except by constant fight.

The great majority of the unfortunates aboard the *Pearl,* whose condition had been so dramatically changed from fugitives to prisoners, were but little accustomed in the dreary monotony of their daily experience to see anything but a somber, dismal streak where should lie the blue in the aspirations of a life. Their part, to follow blindly and obey without question, had been so scrupulously performed as to leave but little time for speculation on the scarce realized blessings and privileges of freedom. When the great opportunity had come in so strange a way to make a dash into the unexpected without ceremony or preparation of any kind, they could scarcely believe in the truth or reality of the situation. Joyously, willingly, and withal prayerfully, they had embraced the opportunity, and but for an act of treachery of which they were not yet aware, an early and fitting realization would have been their proud delight.

The reaction is indeed terrible. The bitter gall and wormwood of failure is the sad and gloomy portion of those seven and sev-

enty souls from whom the hope of freedom had been so ruthlessly snatched. Among them now there were but few who were not completely crushed and broken, their minds seething torrents in which regret, misery, and despair made battle for the mastery.

Children, weeping and wailing, clung to the skirts of their elders, the women with shrieks, groans, and tearful lamentations deplored their sad fate, while the men securely chained, wrist and wrist together, stood with heads dropped forward, too dazed and wretched for aught but to turn their stony gaze within, upon the wild anguish of their aching hearts.

Among those least affected, manifesting little excitement over the strange and surprising turn affairs had taken, was the ever brave and courageous little Emily. Even Emily's sturdy spirit and abiding faith were far from proof against this most serious and sad reverse; yet withal, the misery, sorrow, and disappointment of her companions appealed to her more strongly than the disastrous stroke suffered by her own personal fortunes and those of her brothers and sister. She felt that every move in the changing scenes of their lives was an essential

part in the plans of the Allwise for their final deliverance, and with this feeling it was both easy and natural for her to go about among her sorrowful companions, endeavoring with words of hope and consolation to pluck the thorn from their wounded spirits and out of the depths of deep despair lift their drooping hopes once more into the light.

No one now thought of again seeking that rest which was so sadly needed and which had but a little while ago been so rudely disturbed, save the several children whose tender years made them immune to the sorrows which banished sleep from the eyes of their elders. These slept, indeed, restfully and peacefully, unmindful of an event so tragic in its scope and influence, which had but just gone into history and of which they were the most innocent part. Thrice blessed in truth is this golden epoch of life, the luster of which all the accumulated hosts of misfortunes and trials are in no way able to diminish, and which stands out amid the storms and clouds of after years, like the glorious flush of a first bright, rosy dawn.

Somewhat removed from the several groups of slaves who were bewailing their

sad fate, there sat or more accurately, crouched upon the deck just within the shadow of the one feeble binnacle lamp which relieved the darkness of the lower deck, a poor woman named Eliza Brown. Aunt Eliza she was called by every one, white and black alike. The sound of freedom's note had also fallen with intoxicating sweetness on her ears; and in spite of more than threescore years of hardship, she had cast in her lot with the younger folks to secure this sovereign balm, to solace what of life might yet remain to her.

Emily approached Aunt Eliza when the latter was rocking to and fro, with head bent to her knees, about which her hands were clasped, while a continuous and most piteous moaning sound escaped her lips. Kneeling by her side, Emily tenderly placed an arm about her and said with soothing accent, much as one would employ in speaking to a little child:

"Don't be so sad, dear Aunt Eliza, a better time will come by and by."

The swaying motion of the frail body ceased for a moment, but without looking up, for the old soul had instantly recognized the voice of her young friend, she said:

"Yes, by and by, dat's right—de sweet by and by, an' it's not fur off fur po' Aunt 'Liza, neder."

"Oh, no," continued Emily, "you must not be so despondent, for you know how long the children of Israel were trying to get out of the land of bondage, and the same Lord who befriended them is leading us, but you know He must do it His own way, for He knows best and His way is always the right way."

"Yes, chile, you's sholy right, but I's pow'ful dis'pinted all de same, fur it's orful hard ter be fetched back ter de same ol' life I's libed fer mo' dan sixty yar, an' jes fer de low down trick uv some rascal what ain' got er heart in he body ez big ez er flea."

"Why, how's that, Aunt Eliza? What do you mean?" inquired Emily.

"What, don't yer know chile, dat dis is de work uv dat nigger, Jud' Diggs, jes ez sho ez you's bo'n it is."

Thereupon seeing that her little friend was not familiar with the circumstance, she related the cause of Judson's treachery, how the boys had employed him to take their box to the wharf and on arriving there themselves, found they were without the means

to pay for the hauling. They had, however, endeavored to soothe his disappointment and encouraged him to wait until they should reach Philadelphia, when they had promised to send him a dollar out of their first earnings.

"But," said Emily, reluctant to believe such treachery possible, "I don't think any one could be so low as that. Doubtless our misfortunes have come about from a far different source."

"Well," said the old lady, shaking her head solemnly, "its mighty good ter think dat way, an' yer innercen' heart ain' nebber seed much ob de deceit an' meanness ob de worl', but it's jes lak ah tell yer; dat ole Diggs, he tell dem he fix 'em fer dat money, and he's done gone done it."

Emily was little less than horrified at the depth of wickedness and criminal mischief disclosed by the old woman's view of the matter, and while she was inclined at first to doubt the existence of such heartless treachery, the serious tone of conviction with which the event had been described swept away all unbelief. And although she continually asked herself, can this be true, there came no satisfactory answer, and she felt

that Aunt Eliza's clew was, to her lasting regret, a burning, shameful fact, a disgraceful reality.

She realized that another Judas had been hurled into the very vortex of our human life to shock, to horrify, and to betray—one who in truth might proudly trace his ignoble lineage back to him, the prince of traitors, who with an affrontery unequaled in all the ages, satisfied the brutish clamor of an unreasoning mob by perversion of the most tender symbol born of God to beautify and adorn the life of man. But the end of all things pleasant or painful must come in its own proper season, and in due course the crushed and unhappy fugitives of the *Pearl* viewed with tearful gaze the marble shaft just starting its skyward way, to the memory of the Father of a country in which they were so unjustly used, and back of it to the eastward they saw the gilded dome which rises above the halls of Congress, where as yet no voice had been touched to eloquence through sympathy with their misfortunes.

CHAPTER XIII

GRIEF AT HOME

FOLLOWING the sudden departure of the Edmonson children on their quest of freedom, their parents had remained at the home of the Brents, knowing full well that whatever should be the outcome of the adventure, the news would sooner reach them there. So, for this season of terrible anxiety, their little home in the country, commonplace and lowly though it was, yet withal, sacred to them as the altar of their devoted love and unalloyed affection, was abandoned in order that they might the sooner learn the fate of those so dear to them.

The hours immediately following the departure on Saturday night dragged wearily along. Every moment bore a silent prayer on its upward way, and each thought was burdened with the hope that the absent ones might be kept safe from harm and misfortune. The demonstration of a few days ago in praise and support of the attitude of a

friendly foreign country on the subject of human liberty, was, so far as concerned the capital of the nation, enveloped entirely in the shadow of the active interpretation placed upon it by those seventy and seven unhappy slaves. The whole community stood aghast—bewildered: the master class saw in the movement a formidable entering wedge, which could not fail to split in twain the gnarled and unyielding rail of slavery. The slaves themselves, suspended between hope and fear for the result of this altogether stupendous movement, took counsel among themselves in whispered intercourse, and tremblingly awaited the issue.

As had been the custom for some time previously, a number of earnest Christians assembled at the home of the Brents on the Sabbath morning, and engaged in religious services. The little community which formed the nucleus of membership for a later organization known as the John Wesley A. M. E. Zion Church, was composed of the most intelligent colored persons in the west-end section, both slave and free. The number of the spiritually inclined was considerably increased at this service, presumably under influence of the very serious and

JOHN AND ELIZABETH BRENT
From a crayon drawing by Frederick D. Freeman, a grandson.

unusual affair in which all were most deeply concerned. The spiritual temper, as shown in prayer and exhortation, was never more fervent or animated. The feelings of the congregation found a more informal outlet, when at the conclusion of the service the members lingered about the rooms or on the outside in earnest conversation.

It was perhaps about one o'clock when Mr. Brent, who as deacon of the organization was standing in his doorway, commending the last of the departing brethren and sisters to the merciful care of their Heavenly Master, that Judson Diggs and Cæsar came in view. Approaching at a brisk trot, he was speeding by with a scant nod of recognition, when a loud call from Mr. Brent induced him, though with evident reluctance, to bring Cæsar to a standstill.

Mr. Brent, with the small remnant of his flock attending him, walked over to the cart. The thing uppermost in their minds was to find out what Judson knew about the one subject of evershadowing importance. He on his part was quite aware of this desire and although the day was as mild and pleasant as a day in early spring should be, he felt extremely uncomfortable—beads of

perspiration stood out on face and brow, while an aggravated, itching sensation possessed his body.

With his large black whip he leaned forward and nervously flecked at a troublesome fly which Cæsar's muscular shivers and stubby tail were alike unable to dislodge.

"Har ar yer, brer Brent, yer kinder had er 'tracted meetin' dis mo'nin'," was his greeting as they approached.

"Little more so than usual I believe, but we didn't have the pleasure of your company, Brother Diggs," was the calm reply.

Judson hesitated and shifted his position uneasily before replying. At length he said:

"Naw I couldn't be wid yer dis mo'nin', kase things is mighty cur'ous, an yer know bizness is bizness."

After this last laconic remark, Judson gave Cæsar a poke with his foot to urge him forward, when Mr. Brent moved a step nearer and said:

"Don't be in a hurry, brother, can't you tell us what's goin' on in de city an' what dey are sayin' and doin' erbout de *Pearl?*"

Although Judson felt that something of the kind must come, the name of the fugitive vessel produced upon him a rather strange

effect, for he glared around fiercely into the faces of those about him, sat bolt upright on the seat and said angrily:

"What d'ya s'pose I know erbout de *Pearl?* You know she's gone down de ribber same ez I does, an' I reckon dere ain' no messige come back fum her yit."

"Tut! Tut!" came the soothing reply. "Don't be angry, brother. Yer know we's all cullud folks togeder, an' we can't make much headway 'less we bear one anoder's burdens."

"Dats all right too, but I's ben barin' oder peoples burdins tel I's mos' bent double, an' it's erbout time now I wuz lookin' arter Judson."

"I never thought you wuz one to slight yerself overmuch; but, knowin' yer bizness takes yer in an' out among the 'quality,' we thought yer might have heered what's on de carpet about de *Pearl.*"

The old fellow seemed to hesitate for a moment before replying, and then blurted out as though it was something he was anxious to get through with.

"Well I knows dis, dey better not lose no time, fer deys red hot after dem sho's yer bo'n. Der's Majah Cartwright an' a whole

lot er men on hoss back has gone tearin' down to de wharf an' I specs nothin' else dey'll take one ob dem steam-boats an' foller em ez fas' ez dey can go."

These words fell on the little group with the force of an exploding shell. No one had dreamed that the enemy would so soon become acquainted with the means of escape, yet here, scarcely more than twelve hours removed, they were said to be in full pursuit. How did it come about that they had thought of the river? Was it possible that some one had betrayed the plot? If so, who could it have been?

These questions with numerous others not less pertinent were fired at Brother Diggs in rapid succession, while several of the women folks, becoming very much excited through desperation at their inability to account for the leakage of news, had the hardihood to insinuate that Diggs was no better than he ought to be and that they should not be at all surprised if it turned out that he himself had betrayed the plot.

The news of the pursuit when imparted to the family on the return of Father Brent to the house precipitated a feeling of impending disaster, which speedily transformed the

household, hitherto so hopeful of the outcome, into one of sadness and mistrust. The old folks, with that faith which abides with the true believer through every season of distress and gloom, took fresh courage, born of implicit trust in the Divinity which shapes all ends, and awaited the issue with that resignation, which more than all else, so beautifully realizes the highest ideal of a Christian.

As early as Sunday evening, the city began to show signs of that dangerously excited condition which was soon to threaten the permanent peace and well being of the community. The runaway slaves were the topic of conversation in every house and on every corner of the city. The fact that they had all been well treated—were slaves in name only, was widely commented on and resulted in the generally expressed opinion, that they must be a bad lot anyway, and if brought back should be sent to the Southern slave market and made to realize to the full the real horrors and worst conditions of slavery. Already these proud citizens had ceased to remember the many beautiful and noble words used but a day or two before in praise of the instinctive love of Americans

for freedom and free institutions. How precious is consistency! How rare the discrimination that can recognize what the Supreme Architect of all things intended, and at the same time see His plan made abortive in human society by so fell a purpose as is implied in the consignment to the unequaled hell of human slavery of any portion of the creatures which reflect His image.

Probably but for the earnest words and unyielding front of a few conservative men, who took serious thought for the good name of the city, violence and terrorism would have held grim carnival and a reign of blood and inhumanity might have prevailed. Naturally the forces of abolition, whose champion at the capital was the able and courageous weekly newspaper known as the *National Era* furnished the objective for attack, and every possible demonstration of hatred. Around the humble offices of this brave defender of human rights, gathered those vicious and lawless elements of the community, who hesitated not to saddle upon it all responsibility for the affair, and called loudly for a revenge which should compass the extermination of press and type and the lives of those in control.

Repeated demonstrations on the part of the mob were in evidence, but nothing more serious than broken window panes resulted, chiefly perhaps because no intelligent or responsible head was willing to assume command and shoulder the possible consequences. The river front, however, was the focus towards which the common interest flowed. Whether or not the hated *Pearl* with its "renegade crew" and fleeing slaves would be overhauled was the anxious query on every lip.

CHAPTER XIV

THE RETURN TO WASHINGTON

Long before the hour of noon on that memorable Monday in April it seemed as though the entire city had taken holiday and was more wildly excited than when doing honor, just a few days before, to the sister Republic of France, over her conversion to the principles of universal freedom. "Freedom for France! Slavery for Free America!" Was this the curious and contradictory slogan to which they rallied?

But what an outpouring of all classes there was to witness the misery of those poor unhappy souls. It seemed as if some swift winged messenger had carried the tidings, for people from remote country places were on hand as well as those in easy reach. The news of the flight had traveled far and wide, and the curiosity to see the point of departure, it may be supposed, drew the masses thither. Once on the ground, curiosity kept them chained to the neighborhood,

their wills subjected to their heated imaginations, their whole being fascinated by a realization of the audacity of the undertaking.

When the convoy had arrived with the captured slaves, the wildest excitement took possession of the waiting multitude. So serious, indeed, was the outlook to the authorities, that it was feared a riot might ensue and the debarkation was delayed, while necessary measures were taken to safeguard the prisoners. The Edmonson boys were the first to be brought off, following them came the other men of the captives, chained two and two together, while the Captain, mate, and crew made up a section between these and the women.

It was with the greatest difficulty the crowd was held back to permit their passage, and when Captain Drayton and his crew came in view the mob broke all restraint, and for a few moments it seemed that these poor fellows whose only crime was that they had the hearts of full-grown men in their bosom, were in imminent danger of losing their lives.

One of the ruffianly sons of old Ireland, whom the instinct of heredity should have

made a vigorous champion of justice and freedom, so far forgot the traditions and sufferings of his own people, as to cast himself upon Drayton, and slashing with a huge dirk-knife, cut off a piece of his ear. For a few seconds all the horrors incident to riot and bloodshed were in evidence. The air was filled with the screams of terrorized women and children—the curses and threats of vengeful men, the whole a struggling, swaying mass swept for a season by brutish passions beyond the control of reason. Wisely anticipating some such display, the whole strength of the constabulary of the city had been gathered at the wharf; and after numerous arrests had been made and headaches distributed, a semblance of order was restored.

The march to the jail was then begun, with the surrounding crowd hurling taunts and jeers every step of the way. Through all this scene of turmoil, so revolting to delicate natures, our little Emily and Mary carried themselves with wonderful fortitude. With an arm around each other's waist, and a calm demeanor of quiet and abiding trust, they seemed like two beings from a more peaceful sphere, placed for a time amid

these disquieting scenes, to allay the tumult and call man to reason and his better self.

While proceeding thus, an onlooker said to them:

"Are you not ashamed to run away and make all this trouble for everybody?"

To this Emily replied, "No, sir, we are not, and if we had to go through it again, we'd do the same thing."

Among the silent, though anxious watchers of the progress of events, was Mr. Brent, but the harrowing scene in which those so dear to him were ignominiously paraded in fetters was so terrible to his tender heart that he fell in a heavy swoon and was carried home insensible.

After the fugitives had been lodged in jail the formality of making oath to their property by the owners was proceeded with according to the law of the day. As may be imagined, the Edmonsons had won the esteem of all who knew them, so that it is not surprising that an effort was immediately put on foot to accomplish their purchase. To this end a number of persons called at the jail and were promised by the guardian of the children that they would be granted such an opportunity the next morning.

Meanwhile the slave-dealers, Bruin and Hill, owners of the large slave pen at Alexandria, were on the ground and, by the offer of a cash sum of $4,500 for the six children, completed their irrevocable purchase some time during the night. When the friends and relatives appeared according to agreement early the following morning, this sad fact stared them in the face, and to any and all terms which they proposed, Bruin remained obdurate. The lady with whom Mary had lived offered for her $1,000, which he likewise refused, saying he could get double that amount in the New Orleans market.

During the stay of the fugitives in the prison in Washington considerable hardship was experienced by the children, especially the girls, as only the most meager necessities of life were to be found there. More particularly was this true at night as the chilliness of the air, together with the fact that there were no chairs or beds and only one blanket allowed them, rendered their condition one of exceeding discomfort. With that tender solicitude and self-effacement so natural to womankind in their relation to those most dear to them, the sisters, learning that

their brothers, confined in the dark, damp cellars below, were permitted no covering of any sort, sent their own blankets down to them.

They remained here until Thursday, and shortly before midnight of that day the brothers were handcuffed and with the girls were taken by their new owner in carriages and driven to Alexandria. Here it was they first made the acquaintance of a Georgia Pen and spent the remaining hours of the night alone in a large, dark room, totally devoid of the most ordinary comforts, praying amid sobs and tears for the daylight which it seemed to them would never come. A great consolation, however, was afforded them, when at length after hours of the most terrible mental agony and physical suffering, they were shown to another building for breakfast and to their intense delight found their four brothers seated at the table.

Their stay here, Samuel has often said, was to him, the most miserable of all that unhappy time. It seemed to him, but for the habit of prayer, which was a kind of second nature to all the children, he must have become crazed, for he taxed himself with the feeling of personal responsibility,

for all their ills. He was thus forced to see his sisters day after day for more than a month performing unaccustomed tasks and in some instances those of a most revolting nature. The washing for more than a dozen men fell to their lot, but in this, as in all other requirements, their brothers took upon themselves as large a share of the labor as was possible and would have performed the whole, had such a thing been permitted.

Samuel would often give way to the most bitter grief, saying he would gladly die for them, if by so doing he might save them from the horrible fate which awaited them. But the tide of events was moving along with mysterious and resistless force towards an ocean of possibilities which no human mind could fathom. None indeed save the Great Master Pilot, Who knows each sand-bar and dangerous rock in the sea of human life—Who never slumbers or sleeps, but with a firm hand on the wheel, sends the ship off or brings her up to her true course, could foresee the character of the voyage upon which these poor children had embarked, nor indeed the harbor of ultimate peace and honorable content just a little further along.

In the meantime the officers in charge of the ship were imprisoned. The case against Drayton and Sayres was prosecuted by Philip Barton Key, the District Attorney, before Judge Crawford, and on appeal the prisoners were sentenced to pay a fine of $10,000 and to remain in jail until the same should be paid. English was absolved from all criminal responsibility and given his liberty. After an imprisonment of more than four years they were pardoned by President Fillmore, to whom such application had been presented by Charles Sumner. The fare at the jail was insufficient and of poor quality, and a more wholesome and generous diet was frequently surreptitiously furnished them by Susannah Ford, a colored woman, who sold lunches in the lobby of the Court House.

CHAPTER XV

THE TREACHERY AVENGED

THE return of the fugitive slaves was not without its effect in another direction. Whereas the popular demonstration seemed entirely in support of the owner class, there was underlying all a substratum of sentiment, which though quiet and carefully guarded, was none the less strong in favor of the poor slaves. As might be expected a considerable feeling of resentment was entertained by the whole Negro population against the one who was primarily responsible for the capture. It was commonly understood and believed, that, but for Judson Diggs, all of these fugitives would have made good their escape, and instead of being now prisoners as well as slaves, they would have in due time been permitted to breathe the air of a free land.

Now, all was changed. There had descended upon them the horrible blackness of despair, and there loomed on the horizon

of their expectations, only the unutterable miseries of the slave pen and auction block. As for the wretch who had wrought all this mischief, who had taken upon himself to consign these men, women and children to so fearful and heartless a doom, what indeed must have been his state of mind? By what means did he satisfy his outraged conscience? By what sophistries of reason did he convince his inmost being of the rectitude of so unnatural a deed and justify so devilish a piece of treachery?

The poor, pitiful little mite of twenty-five cents or the indignant repudiation by a good and beautiful young girl scarcely more than a child, of attentions on his part, which could but be both ridiculous and repulsive, were each or both doubtless the incentive, but that is only a more pitiable reality to indicate the degradation to which mankind may descend. The right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness of these seventy-seven souls, was thus actually bartered for a piece of silver, and irrevocably lost in retaliation for the righteous denial of an unholy and unnatural wish. Probably some idea of the enormity of his transgression may have come home to Diggs when he saw

those miserable and unhappy people hurried away in chains to prison. He had been seen on the wharf by a number of persons, but when the reaction of sentiment turned to demand the punishment of him who had performed the deed of treachery, he could nowhere be found. In all charity, may we not take this as some evidence of a possible sense of shame and regret on his part?

The feeling against Diggs, however, was soon intense and threats of vengeance were to be heard on every hand. The old folk without directly encouraging the movement were loud in their denunciation, and their words were easily construed as sympathy for whatever form of punishment might be suggested. The younger element, among whom were many of the relatives of the captives, were strong in their purpose of revenge and needed no encouragement to visit upon the head of the culprit the just wrath of the outraged colored population.

Diggs had long since ceased to mingle in friendly intercourse with his old associates and had abandoned altogether the various religious meetings held at Brother Brent's home. Some said his money was turning his head, others that he was afraid of missing

an opportunity to make a dime, while there were still others who thought the old fellow was losing his mind. Whether or not these various opinions reached Diggs is not in evidence, but certain it is they influenced him neither one way nor another, for he and Cæsar kept right on in the even tenor of their busy lives and to all outward seeming cared not the value of a fig what folks thought of them.

It was on a Saturday evening following the "Return" and the subsequent deportation of the Edmonsons to the slave pen at Alexandria, that a party of youngsters, numbering a dozen or more, and of an age between fourteen and twenty, had managed to get together for a brief season of sport. The place was on the bank of a small stream, at a point midway the square bounded by L and M Streets, Connecticut Avenue and Eighteenth, which in those days was a tributary of old Rock Creek and flowed eastward through the city. A brother of the boys for whom Diggs had hauled the box to the wharf was in the party. They had been playing at leap-frog and other games popular in that day, and had about concluded in time to return to their duties, when they spied the

Diggs outfit coming up the road. Instantly their wits began working.

"Let's give the old rascal a shaking up," said one.

"All right," said another. "We'll pay him up for that trick he served the *Pearl.*"

"Let's give him a ducking," said a third.

This last seemed to strike the popular fancy and so it was agreed to roll him into the branch and wash away some of his many sins.

Cæsar was until now moving along at an easy trot, with his master holding the reins loosely, comfortably seated in the front of the cart. Seeing the boys move out into the middle of the road, the old fellow seemed instantly to suspect hostility and so jumped immediately to his feet and began whipping and shouting in the effort to urge Cæsar to his best speed. The inherent disposition of the beast here played in with the purpose of the boys, and as he failed to develop the speed so much desired by his master, they were soon surrounded and at the mercy of the adversary. To capture the reins was but the work of a second and another to secure them to a large stone by the roadside.

Diggs was beside himself with anger. He pranced about in the cart, shook his fists at the boys and sputtered and stammered incoherently.

"Come on now and get out, you old tale-teller; we're going to give you something else to take to the white folks," said the oldest boy in the party.

Diggs declined the invitation and yelled at the top of his voice:

"You gib me dem reins dis minit, how dare youse stop me in my lawful business, I'll repote ebery moder's son ob yer ter de Majah, an' he'll fix yer, yer young varmunts."

"Dats er nuf outer de ole rascal, le's pull him out an' be done wid it," said another one of the crowd.

This was easier said than done for when they essayed to climb into the cart he kicked right and left so viciously as to hold them at bay for several minutes. At length one aggressive youngster grabbed him by the foot, and in a little while he was struggling against his fate, securely held to the floor of the cart. He was then lifted out fighting desperately, but was soon quiet through

sheer exhaustion, showing his deep distress and rage, however, by continued foaming at the mouth and excessive hard breathing.

They were now only a few yards distant from the bank of the stream, the victim carried along by four of the boys while the others clamored around, probing him with sticks, derisively hooting and jeering. Diggs now seemed to realize that he was powerless in their hands and true to his principles of action made a complete change of front. From abuse and defiance, he essayed to effect his deliverance by cajolery and flattery.

"Now boys, let de ole man go, I knows yer jes playin', an' it's all in fun. Ha! Ha! Ha!" he laughed. "Let me go now, dats good boys. I knows boys will be boys."

"Yes, we'll let you go," came the reply in tones of irony, "right into the branch too, at that. Come on boys, let's finish him up."

With this they approached within a few feet of the bank. Seeing that his last effort would not save him, the poor wretch began to whine and beseech them not to throw him into the cold water.

"I knows it'll be de def o' me, kase I aint

use ter sich doin's, an' I knows yer don' wan' ter kill er po' ole man like me."

The fellow who had him by the shoulders then yelled in his ear: "What did you do to them people on de *Pearl?* You didn't have no pity on them, did you? Come on, boys, here he goes," he concluded, as they rushed towards the edge of the bank.

"Oh, Lor'! Oh, Lor'! hol' on boys, I'll gib yer er hunnerd dollars ef yer lemme go."

For answer, as if by prearrangement, two lines were formed down the side of the bank, a few feet apart and reaching to the edge of the stream. All at once without further warning, he was rolled over and down the line to the last two, who gave him the final push, which landed him splashing in the water. The deepest part was less than four feet but his immersion was as effectual as if it had been twenty. Regaining almost immediately his hands and feet he spluttered and snorted about in the water with as much fuss as a shaggy dog emerging from a river plunge. But he was then pelted with dirt and stones, until, by a happy thought he took himself out of range, to the shelter of the little bridge hard by. Under cover of darkness the poor creature, chilled, miserable

and bruised, lay down in his frail, old cart and relied on the instinct of the stubborn, though faithful Cæsar, the only thing in the city he might call his friend, to find the way homeward.

CHAPTER XVI

ANTI-SLAVERY CIRCLES AROUSED

THE years preceding the close of the first half of the Nineteenth Century, being the period in which the clash of contending opinions was most violent, is perhaps the most interesting as well as the most turbulent of any from the time of the foundation of the Republic to the dissolution of the Union. Perhaps, too, no other event lent its influence in such great measure to strengthen and solidify the forces for abolition as the attempted escape and subsequent capture of the fugitives of the *Pearl*.

At a meeting of the American Anti-Slavery Society held about this time, William Lloyd Garrison said, among other pertinent things, that the recent capture of seventy-seven slaves in the District of Columbia and their noble-hearted friends would bring up the question whether slavery existed in that territory. He rejoiced that they had made the attempt, and though he was

not unmindful of the increased suffering to which many of them would be subjected, he also rejoiced that they were retaken, and that the Chaplain of the Senate and a representative of the Church went into the cars as they were about to take their last farewell of their homes for the South and fraternized with the slave-buyers. "It was frank and honest and was an exhibition of the state of the times in which we live. These slaves would draw the attention and sympathy of the nation after them in their lonely pilgrimage to the South. He was glad that one of these slaves belonged to the President, for we had thus the representative of the nation as well as the Church pledged to slavery."

At this meeting, spoke Frederick Douglass, who had already attracted the attention of the civilized world to his remarkable career, and also Lucretia Mott; both received great applause. So it happens, that about the cause of freedom for the slave, within the shadow of which all else was hopelessly obscured, there was gathered the best material of the age—the flower of the highest chivalry and culture in the land. Garrison, Phillips, Lovejoy, Tappan and

such persons of lofty ideals battled against wrong and injustice, lending every fiber of their strength to the overthrow of the system whose influence was equally baneful to humanity and a united country. Aiding with pen and voice was the small body of brave and intelligent colored men such as Purvis, Ward, Pennington, Garnet, and Still, who labored vigorously and unceasingly throughout the long twilight which preceded the dawn of freedom.

These were, indeed, men fashioned in heroic mold, men whose noble championing of the most oppressed of mankind has given to history the brightest of its many golden pages and enriched with their illustrious names the emblazoned scroll of the world's immortals. The procession of events in this the greatest question ever before the American people was now leading gradually to the point whence the outlook was indeed gloomy for the well-being of the nation—when the earnest thought of the most brilliant minds of the country was given to the question involved in the extension or abolition of slavery.

The United States Congress, embracing representatives from all sections of the coun-

try, was the central battle ground. The struggle was intensely bitter and often tragic. The clash of opinions reëchoed throughout the national domain, and the governments of Europe, from the lofty height of imperial power and privilege, viewed with increasing interest the desperate malady which might precede the death agony of the Republic. The first number of Mr. Garrison's paper the *Liberator,* issued in Boston on January 1, 1831, heralded its purposes in this motto: "My country is the World,—My Countrymen are All Mankind." A most fitting message of hope, bearing comfort and cheer to the lowly and oppressed of every race, wherever found. In its declaration of principles, its fearless and aggressive owner boldly announced, in the face of what was then almost universal apathy on the subject of slavery, this sentiment, "I am in earnest. I will not equivocate, I will not excuse, I will not retreat a single inch and I will be heard."

That he was in earnest, that he did not equivocate, did not excuse and that he was heard, is as evident to-day as that the country itself exists. It is much to the credit of the Negro as a race, that the first substantial

support received by Mr. Garrison in the publication of the *Liberator,* came from James Forten, a wealthy colored man of Philadelphia. Mr. Forten sent $50 with the names of twenty-five subscribers; and with this incentive, the journal entered on its unexampled career of usefulness. From the first number in January, 1831, it was issued without interruption, until December, 1865, when after thirty-five years of conflict with the slave power, it recorded a ratification of an amendment to the Constitution of the United States, forever prohibiting the existence of slavery.

The sorrow and hardship of the position in which the Edmonsons were now placed was no doubt felt most keenly by their dear old parents, Paul and Amelia. As has been already related, a brother-in-law of the children, overcome by his feelings at the sight of his relatives being borne away to prison in chains, was carried home in a dead faint. When later on he was able to relate it, the poor parents listened to the sad story, amid tears and lamentations. The mother became a veritable Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted because they were not. The terrible conviction

was borne in upon them, through this latest calamity, that all of their children were now doomed to the Southern market, and they gave themselves up to the most poignant grief. The mother has since said in describing that dreadful time:

"Oh, what a day was that, never a morsel of anything could I put into my mouth. Paul and me, we fasted and prayed before the Lord night and day for our poor children."

Events, however, proceeded rapidly. The tears and groanings of loved ones, the torture of tender hearts and the anguished cry which bursts forth when family ties are ruthlessly severed, availed not to stay the hand of an over cruel fate, and at length another step was taken in their itinerary of sorrow, when they were placed aboard a steamboat with about forty other slaves and taken to Baltimore. One day and night were spent in the voyage, and upon arrival they were thrown into a slave pen kept by a partner of Bruin & Hill.

The man who had charge of this place was a person of the most brutal instincts, grossly profane and inconsiderate in his remarks to women. They were forbidden here even

to pray together, which hardship was in a measure obviated by rising very early in the morning, when in solemn and earnest petition they besought the protection and blessing of their Heavenly Father. Here they met "Aunt" Sophy, a most pious Christian, who had been sold away from her husband; and to her wise and sympathetic counsel, the girls owe the mitigation of many hardships, which otherwise they would have been obliged to endure. They were detained in Baltimore more than two weeks, during which friends in Washington were earnestly planning and working for their redemption.

A few evenings before they were to leave for the South, a message was received by telegraph, that a friend would arrive next day to make arrangements for their purchase and that a goodly sum was already in hand. This, of course, was very consoling, and the hearts of the children swelled with joy and hope. A sad disappointment awaited them, however, for when the messenger arrived, they had all been placed an hour before aboard the brig *Union,* outward bound for New Orleans.

The money available as a portion of the ransom for the children amounted to $900,

and was the gift of a grandson of John Jacob Astor. This sum, which was considered inadequate for the purpose, was finally accepted by agreement with the trader, in purchase of Richard Edmonson, whose wife and children were said to be suffering in Washington, and the money deposited in bank in the city. Richard, however, was not allowed to be brought back, even though the brig had not yet sailed, and the money had been paid for him, and so with his other brothers and sisters he was borne away to sea, knowing not whether he should ever look upon the faces of his loved ones again.

The voyage to New Orleans covered a period of seven days, during which much suffering was experienced. There were eleven women in the party, all of whom were forced to live in one small apartment, while the men, numbering thirty-five or forty, were in another not much larger. Most of them being entirely unaccustomed to travel by water, were afflicted with all the horrors of seasickness. Little Emily's sufferings from this cause were most pitiable, and so serious was her condition at one time that the boys feared she would die. As always

and in all circumstances they were most kind and attentive, and would tenderly carry her out on deck whenever the heat in their close quarters became too oppressive, and buy whatever little comforts were in their reach to minister in all possible ways to the sister's relief. Apart from the circumstances of restraint imposed by their numbers and lack of adequate accommodations, the voyage as far as the Carolinas was pleasant enough from a purely physical standpoint. Those of them who were able to control the mutinous symptoms of their internal organism as to be able to partake of food, were plentifully, though coarsely, provided for.

But at this point in their progress, adverse winds, blowing with increasing violence, drove them far out of their course, so that their arrival in the vicinity of Key West was very much delayed. Meetings for prayer were nightly held in which the burden of their petition was that the winds, which seemed in league with their better fortunes, might shape the course to New York instead of New Orleans. Their condition had aroused much sympathy among the sailors, who as a class are ever broadminded and liberal, and much given to take the part

of the under dog in any kind of fight. One of them promised Samuel, that if they were blown within a hundred miles of the former port and the slaves would back him up, he would put the Captain out of the way and pilot them in himself. The serious wish to befriend and an impulse evincing so generously the tender side of our human nature was not without a consoling influence, and doubtless aided materially in a revival of faith and hopefulness. A translation of this wish into action was not permitted, for in due time, after repeated signaling for a pilot to guide them safely past the dangers of the Keys, a boat of the class desired was seen approaching, and its master with the captain of the brig were soon parleying as to terms.

CHAPTER XVII

SUFFERING AND WAITING

During the controversy which followed between the Captain of the *Pearl* and the pilot over the price of the latter's services, much discomfort and actual suffering was endured by the slaves, who as a matter of precaution against possible evidence of slave traffic, had been hurriedly stowed below deck. A heavy canvas hood was then thrown over the closely grated hatchway, precluding all possible circulation of air. Imprisoned in the narrow confines of this miserable hole, with every vestige of light and air excluded, their situation was painful. The intense natural heat of the day, a necessary adjunct of the latitude through which they were now sailing, reënforced by the stifling between-deck atmosphere of an old hulk, with its accumulated odors of concentrated filth emanating from each uncaulked seam and gaping crevice, produced an atmosphere of suffocation and utter helplessness.

To relieve the situation in some degree, the men punched holes in the canvas and struggled with each other for a position near the opening. The women shouted or fainted according as their strength waxed or waned, and in all respects a pandemonium of hysterics, suffering and excitement reigned throughout the pilot's interview, which seemed so much prolonged. When it was at length concluded by the pilot's refusal of assistance and final departure, the hatchway was uncovered and the poor unfortunates, as each one gathered strength, crawled back to the light and air of the upper deck.

Mary and Emily were acute sufferers during this interval, while the boys with all their hardihood showed by haggard looks and feeble movements the effects of the terrible half hour all had endured. As soon as the latter were able, the sisters were carried on deck and in due course the tide of life and health resumed its normal flow. The inability to agree as to terms of pilotage forced the Captain to abandon the direct route which the ship was now holding and bring her up on another course, in which the dangerous Keys need not be reckoned with. This action prolonged the passage several

days, and before the destined port was reached, the scarcity of food had brought starvation within the range of gruesome possibility. The imminent failure of the water supply made necessary the restriction of the slaves' allowance to a gill a day. The sailors were each allowed a quart and true to their generous impulses a pint of this was donated each day to the Edmonson boys for the comfort of their sisters.

Finally in addition to the miseries already detailed, was added the horror of a violent storm, which they ran into early on the morning of their arrival at the mouth of the Mississippi. The voyage from the start had been over smooth seas with only that long and rippleless swell which, while a serious and effectual promoter of seasickness, infused in some degree a reasonable sense of security in these unhappy voyagers of the sea. The boundless water with its dazzling daylight sheen and nightly phosphor glow, stretching out to meet the bending starlit sky, impressed these untutored souls as a mighty Apocalypse, unfolding to their untried vision the glory and beauty of Creation as well as the marvelous power of the Creator.

The violence of the storm in which they found themselves, produced something far more intense and weighty than a sense of mere physical fear; the feeling that, not only were they themselves, unqualifiedly dependent upon the Great Ruler of the Universe, but that their masters, the powerful and indisputable arbiters of their physical being, were no less so. This impressed them profoundly. They saw these, their boastful owners, with strained and eager eyes, and blanched and frightened visage, powerless, even as they, before this startling manifestation of Omnipotence, as from out the black, low-hanging clouds, came the frightful thunder of the tempest, with mountains of water threatening to engulf—the creak and groan of straining timbers. But to them through it all there seemed to come a still, small voice of love and compassion, threatening a consuming wrath to their oppressors, and for themselves a promise of the unspeakable joys of a new and changed existence.

During the first days of the voyage the ship had bowled along with sails all set and filled with a breeze more than moderately stiff. With no employment other than such as was necessary for their personal comfort

and convenience, each waking hour brought its fill of serious thought and interchange of friendly confidence. The sisters and brothers, sharing each without reserve the entire trust of the others, found much consolation in this close communion, and were often lifted beyond the scrutiny of their misfortunes to realize for a time a positive sense of pleasure in their unusual surroundings.

On one of these days and at such an interval, the midday meal just ended, they grouped themselves within the pleasant shade of the great fore-sail. The indescribable stillness of a ship swiftly sailing under the pelting rays of a scorching sun, a quiet like unto nothing else in nature, which neither the rhythmic splash of parting waters, the flap of filling sail, nor creak of spar can ever penetrate, had enveloped all in its mystic spell. The slave-traders, as well as the crew, were enjoying a rest below, so that the man at the wheel was the only person beside the slaves about the upper deck.

They had been lounging restfully, thoughtfully, each engaged with thoughts unspoken, when Mary, lifting her head from her brother's knee, said with a gesture towards the sea:

"Sammy, do you see this great water that is all around us now?"

"Of course I see it, sister," came the reply, "but come, tell us what you are thinking about."

"Well," she answered, "I have been thinking of the wonderful power of the Good Lord, Who controls each and every drop that goes to make up its vast body. He could in the flash of an eye whip its placid surface into the rage and fury of a tempest, and yet how blind men are, who will risk not only life but their very souls in such traffic as that which so terribly persecutes us."

"Yes, child," replied he, "but you must know that men will stop at nothing if money is to be gained, and nowadays there's more money in selling folks like us than in anything else. Most of them that do it call themselves Christians, and make believe they think it's right. Why, I heard old Bruin say one Sunday, when a brother trader had brought him what he called a 'likely darky woman,' 'You'll have to see me to-morrow, 'cause I took communion this mornin', an' I never talk business after communion.'"

"Don't you think some of them are honest when they profess to believe they have a right to do as they do?" asked Mary.

"No, I don't, for there's some strange thing in the eye of man that you don't find in that of any other created thing. I don't know what to call it or how to describe it, but it's just as though the Almighty had made the eye His earthly agent to connect His Divinity with the souls of men."

"Why is it then," asked Mary, "that so many disregard this very thing which as you say, all men must recognize?"

"Well men are strongheaded, and they don't do right because they believe it is to their interest to do the other thing, but just as sure as we live, sister, the people who are making trade of broken hearts and human sorrows will reap the whirlwind one of these days, and nobody knows how soon it will be."

"My heart tells me you are right, Sammy, for what a comforting thought it is to feel that we may leave it all in His hands, knowing full well that whatever comes, the Savior will give us strength to bear it."

Emily had been listening intently to the earnest words of her brother and sister, with

a far away look in her large brown eyes, and as the latter concluded, she clasped her hands over her bosom and said with impressive accent:

"Oh, children, I see mother now; she is on her knees praying for us. Yes, dear mother," she continued, as though the one addressed was with them in the flesh, "we will all kneel and pray with you."

And amid sobs and tears which burst forth uncontrolled from every eye, each one knelt under the open sky amid that dreary waste of water, and lifted up their hearts with the mother spirit in fervent, silent prayer.

After a few moments, while they were still kneeling, Emily began singing in soft sweet tones, and one by one the others joined until losing sight of their surroundings, a full, grand chorus of pathetic harmonies, tuned to the sad, sweet song of the captive Jews by the waters of Babylon, floated upward and away, a melodious expression of constancy and Christian resignation:

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down,
Yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willow in the midst thereof.
For they that carried us away captive required of us a song and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth: if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."

The sounds of this strange, sweet melody, which to those below seemed to come from the air or the sea, they knew not where, brought every man on deck and when the song was ended, the entire ship's company, cap in hand was gathered about the kneeling group. They, pouring forth this plaintive wail from hearts overcharged with the burden of their misfortunes, were wholly oblivious to all things else. The traders commanded them to continue, but the terrible shadow of their fate had again fallen upon them and the song had died in the

heart. They could sing no more. The spell was broken.

The storm, into which the ship had finally come was safely outridden, and they were in due time towed up the river, and being permitted to remain on deck, beheld for the first time great plantations of cotton, reaching away to inland with their untold myriads of snowy blooms, and there fell upon their sympathetic ears the plaintive songs of the slave gangs as with nimble fingers they plucked from nature's outstretched palm her lavish stores of wealth.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE NEW ORLEANS SLAVE PEN

THE landing of the slaves was not effected until ten o'clock next morning when they were marched through the city to the show rooms and to the inhumanities of a Georgia Pen. Walking out into the yard of the place, Emily was horrified to find herself face to face with men and women of all ages and stages of physical development and every degree of wretchedness. Some were standing, others lying or sitting around, singly and in groups, while on each face was depicted that which told of bitter heartaches or bespoke a grief firm-seated, over which the terrible cast of utter despair had spread and settled.

The poor girl, in her brief experience of the sorrows of slave life, had considered that she had fathomed the depths of all that could produce a shiver of horror or wave of sympathy in keen and sensitive natures. The sight before her was a few steps ahead

of anything yet encountered, and to that degree she felt her own misfortunes lessened, and her heart, a well of tender sympathy, seeking the means wherewith to comfort and cheer these poor despised children of mankind who seemed more friendless and desolate than herself.

This, the yard of the pen, was a sort of feeder for the showroom and in its function, very much like the stockroom of some large mercantile establishment, through which the goods in the salesroom, removed through the ordinary channels of business, are replenished. The moment a bargain had been concluded in the showroom and the goods removed, the stockyard was overhauled for a suitable subject to fill in the gap, the slave showing the greatest number of commendable points was given the preference, and in due course, after a scrubbing and polishing, was placed on exhibit to undergo the preliminary tortures of inspection and the hazard of strange and uncertain ownership.

To the sensitive nature of Emily there was revealed far more terrible evils of this monster slave-traffic, than were shown in the sad condition of these scores of unhappy beings. She knew that, like her own, many

other homes had been bereaved and the treasures of other hearthstones spoiled and scattered. Husbands torn away from loving companions, children, tender and irresponsible, deprived of needed care and protection and forced to spend a novitiate of sorrow and hardship under a system the most accursed and depraved human wickedness can conceive. With this panorama of evils crowding before her in all their hideous nakedness, it is not strange that the heart of Emily overflowed, and as she turned away from but a brief survey of these harrowing scenes, the floodgates of compassion were opened and her overwrought nature spent itself in tears. This display of feeling, while creditable alike to her exalted qualities of mind and heart, was most unfortunate as to time and place, however, and brought upon her a humiliation far deeper and a sorrow more poignant than any she had yet suffered.

At the moment of her return to the showroom, the trader who had them in charge, a man whose instincts were all coarse and brutal, was looking around for her with the view of exhibiting her to an overdressed young fellow, whose dapper little person was

fairly agleam with showy jewels. He was seeking, he said, a young person of cheerful disposition, whom he desired to install as his housekeeper. The trader had decided that Emily would just fill the bill, but the moment she was brought forward with signs of recent grief so apparent in her face and manner, the customer decided that she would not do, saying that "he had no room for the sniffles in his house" and so the negotiation ended.

The trader was so incensed at losing what he termed a rare bargain (the customer having offered $1,500 for a girl who would suit) that he slapped Emily on the face and threatened to send her to the Calaboose to be whipped, should she be caught crying again. Shortly after this occurrence an elderly slave woman talked in a kindly way with Emily, advising her to appear as cheerful as possible when the overseers were around, as otherwise she would be subjected to the severest tasks and made the object of much harsh treatment and abuse. The brothers, always watchful of everything in which the girls were concerned, were anxious to know what had been said to her and when told, agreed that they would all fare

better if their conduct were shaped in accordance with the suggestion which the kind heart of the woman had advanced for their benefit.

However much the poor girl's feelings were bruised through the incident just related, there may never be reason to doubt that her noble heart swelled with pious thankfulness for the God-given inspiration of pity, which had led to the subjection of her personal misfortunes and permitted a compassionate regard of the miseries of others. As for those tears, thrice over blessed, may they not be looked upon as the preserver of the purity and integrity of a priceless jewel, whose luster should otherwise have been forever dimmed by the darksome shadows of bespoilment?

The trials and indignities of the new life into which the Edmonsons had now been ushered, were not suffered alone by the girls, for the very night of their arrival at New Orleans, the boys had their hair closely cropped, their faces shaved and their clothing, which, as to cut and texture, was of a higher grade than the average dress of the slave, exchanged for suits of coarse blue jean, which so altered their appearance that

their sisters scarcely knew them. They were compelled daily to stand in an open porch facing the street to attract the notice of passers-by and when either of them was so fortunate as to attract the attention of a possible purchaser, he or she was taken into the showroom and subjected to an examination in much the same way as if they were a horse or cow.

These ordeals were naturally felt more keenly by the girls, for at such times their persons were handled rudely to the accompaniment of indecent or vulgar jests. At such times, Emily and Mary found it impossible to restrain their tears and finally complained to their brothers and prevailed upon them to intercede with Wilson, the partner of Bruin and Hill, who had them in charge. To the credit of Wilson it may be said, that after this, the treatment of the girls was more considerate.

Experience seems to sustain the thought that there is no cloud, however black and forbidding its perspective, but somewhere has its silver lining, and so it seemed just here with the Edmonson children; a thousand miles from the place of their birth and placed in circumstances the most unfortu-

nate and unhappy, they were not entirely devoid of all elements of consolation, for somewhere in the great bustling, busy city of New Orleans, resided their eldest brother. The girls only knew of him, as it were, by tradition and casual reference to him in the conversation of the family, but the thoughts of all were now quite naturally turned in his direction and the situation thoroughly canvassed as to the means of reaching him.

Hamilton Edmonson had been sold in the New Orleans slave market about the year 1840 when he took the name of his purchaser, and was thereafter known as Hamilton Taylor. He learned the trade of cooper and was allowed a percentage of his earnings, but was unfortunate in having his first savings stolen. He eventually acquired his freedom through a payment of $1,000. He continued in the cooperage business, was highly respected and became comparatively wealthy, having a place of business on Girard near Camp Street.

The Divinity, which had so far shaped their course, had also provided the means for the realization of their desire, for Richard being in reality free, although held arbitrarily (the money being on deposit in

Baltimore for his purchase) seemed the especially fitted instrument for the emergency. After spending one entire day in the search, his efforts were crowned with success and early on the day following, the brother was brought to the Pen; and off in a corner of the miserable place (the utmost in the way of privacy that might be managed) the afflictions of the past and distress of the present seemed more like some horrible dream, seen through the rosy glow of a real and perfect joy.

CHAPTER XIX

JOYFUL MEETING WITH A LOST BROTHER

THE story of their elder brother Hamilton had been repeated to them since before their baby tongues could lisp his name, and many a day in the early eventime, their sturdy little spirits rebellious, " 'cause bedtime come too soon," the good mother wishing to be free of their care, to complete some appointed task, would whisper of his coming and as if some sorcerer's wand had laid them under tribute to its magic spell, their tired lids were weighted down in dreamy slumber. With the coming of maturer years their vivid fancy was often entertained with the recital of the trials and difficulties into which his aggressive manhood, chafing under the restraints of the slave system, constantly placed him. The noble courage and persistent defiance of a determined soul, battling along against the most discouraging odds for the recognition and preservation of the feeble spark of human rights,

which he felt some day would illuminate the altar of his soul, took lasting hold on their memories.

His final break for liberty, conceived by himself and executed with a man named Briscoe, had made him their hero loved and revered always, with whom the knights of fable and storied legend might never compare. The fact that the effort was a failure and that he was brought back from Baltimore in chains and then sold away to the South, only served to increase his fame. It seemed now too good to be true, that this great strong fellow, with an arm around each and pressing them to him so eagerly, is he, who in fancy only they knew so well. Yet so it is, and they nearly faint with joy at the thought that they are held in his arms and have felt the rapid heart beat of their very own dear brother, who is entirely and completely free. The moments pass all too rapidly and the brief half hour which is permitted them in which to whisper of their varied experiences seems scarcely more than an instant of time.

When the first flush of excited pleasure had passed, Hamilton looking upon them fondly, said:

"Who would ha' thought dat I had two sech putty sisters as dese, an' dis here one, dis is Em'ly; ain't she de zact spit ob ow moder ez she use ter look 'fore dey wuz bo'n. Lor' bless me," he continued, as he drew them to him again and looked with love and admiration from one to the other, "It do beat me how people kin hab de heart ter make slaves of sech gals as dese, who talk an' look ez good ez eny white pusson I eber seed (ceptin' dat dere color is richer an' puttier), an' den spec dem ter be 'tented an' satisfied wid dere lot."

"We know all about your running away, brother Hamilton, and we're awful glad you did it too," said Mary, "because if you hadn't you wouldn't be free now, would you?"

"No, I don't think I would, chile, 'cause de longer yer put up wid enything, de harder it is ter break erway; an' I guess I'd been slavin' roun' erbout dere yit ef I hadn' run erway ter Balt'mo' dat time."

"How is it you never wrote to mother? She has told us so much about you and has been so anxious to hear from you," inquired Emily.

"Well, I did, chile," came the answer

with a world of feeling in the tone, "fer I had sev'al letters wrote 'fore I bought merself but I s'pose dey nebber lef' de plantation, an' den aft I'd saved up de fus thous'n ter buy mersef an' had it stole fum me, I got so much down in de heart dat I didn' seem ter keer for nothin', but I kep' on wukkin', an' by an' by I gits anoder thous'n togeder, an' den I buys mersef sure nuf, an' den I thinks ter mersef, I'll sabe mer money an' one ob dese days I'll git on de kyars an' gib moder an' all de res' ob yer a good s'prise, but here you'b come an' tunned de tables, but I'm pow'ful glad ter see yer, all de same, doa I can' hep wishin' de sitooation ha' been very diffunt."

"Yes, it is very hard, brother," said Emily, "but we must not despair, for the good Lord, Who has given us this happiness has our destiny in His hands, and in His own time will make all things right."

"Yer mighty right 'bout dat chillun, an' it makes me feel good to know dat yer hab dat same kin' er faith dat is de strong hope ob ow fader an' moder. Jes' hab a stout heart an' keep on prayin' an' tek things ez ezy ez yer kin an' yer ol' brudder is goin' ter see ef he can' do suppin' ter mak yer mo'

comfo-ble eny way, 'cause dis place ain' fittin' fer er dog much less dem dats bin useter er nice, decen' home."

Before Hamilton left the pen he talked with the trader and by assuming responsibility for the safety of the girls secured his assent to their spending the nights at his home. By this arrangement they were permitted the comfort of clean beds with the addition of wholesome meals morning and evening. This was especially welcome to the girls, as the lodging room for the women, in which there were no beds, was much overcrowded, and they were forced to sleep on the bare floor, with only a dirty blanket for covering.

The arrangement through which the nights of the two sisters were passed in comfort and under the protection of their brother Hamilton, while alleviating in great degree the disagreeable character of their surroundings, could not in any manner save them from the revolting cruelties which were daily inflicted upon their companions in misery. During this time several persons were whipped to death for various infractions of discipline, while if any one of the slaves offended by going to sleep in the day

time he was cruelly beaten. Among these unfortunates were several little children, who through standing idly all the day, were often overcome with drowsiness. At such times Mary and Emily would carefully watch the little ones, and allow them to sleep until the overseer was heard approaching, when they were hurriedly awakened.

Another case which grieved them sorely, was that of a young man and woman in the prison, who were engaged to be married. The couple were sold to different owners, and were so distressed at their separation that they could not perform the duties expected of them. The man was sent back with the complaint that he would not do and the money had to be refunded. This so enraged the trader that he condemned him to be flogged each night for a week, after which every male slave in the place was required to lay on five lashes, under penalty of a severe flogging through failure to perform the same. The woman was also returned with a note from her new mistress, requesting that she be whipped and enclosing the money to pay for the service.

While going to and fro between their brother's house and the pen the girls were

often pained at seeing gangs of women cleaning the streets of the city. Some of these were old, others young and comely, but all with that dull and sorrowful cast of countenance which told of a dreadful hopelessness which sat enthroned in their hearts and that pain which tortures the spirit more cruelly than the sufferer from physical ills may ever feel. Hamilton was ever vigilant in the effort to find good homes and owners for his brothers and sisters and at length one day, the overseer took Samuel away in a carriage and some time after returned without him.

The others soon found that he was sold, but for fear of the cruel punishment which would follow any display of feeling, they were compelled to stifle their sobs amid the tumult of their aching hearts and covertly flash a glance of sympathy and affection from eyes that were strained to withhold their tears. During the second week at New Orleans, word had been received from Washington that a considerable part of the money for the purchase of the girls was in hand. This was afterward found to be incorrect, but the intelligence served the purpose of an assurance to them, that the hearts

of faithful friends, touched to pity by their misfortunes, were inspired to earnest effort in their behalf, and that they need not be without a reasonable hope that the day of their deliverance was not far removed. Towards the end of the third week, a movement as unexpected as welcome, was inaugurated by Wilson, the trader in charge, looking to their immediate return to the North. The fact that Yellow Fever was now raging in the city, urged the speedy removal of so much valuable property, beyond the possibility of its deadly contact; besides Richard Edmonson, having already been purchased, must of necessity be sent to Washington without delay.

They were embarked aboard the brig *Union,* after a little more than three weeks of painful experiences in New Orleans, with mingled feelings of sadness and joy. The added sorrow of leaving behind their newly found brother and of separating from Samuel, ever the kindest and most thoughtful of brothers, was considered the keenest affliction they had yet been called upon to endure, while the thought that they were returning to the north and prospectively to

freedom seemed to them overwhelmingly an evidence of Divine favor.

Just as the deepening twilight descends upon ships and wharves and throws into bold relief a thousand flashing jewels of light to welcome with safety the coming and speed the departing ship, they look with moistened eyes, as the vessel is towed out of the harbor, thankful for the joy with which their unhappiness had been tempered, regretful of the sudden loss whose shadow had fallen upon them and expectant, yes fervently expectant of the coming of a brighter and happier day.

CHAPTER XX

THE BROTHERLINESS OF HAMILTON

Near the St. Louis Hotel, New Orleans, on the busy thoroughfare of that name, there stood at this time a massive residence of stone and stucco having ample grounds, made beautiful by trees and flowers, stretching out from the sides and rear. The massive iron gates on the left admitted to the porte-cochere, over a driveway leading to a circle of smooth cropped lawn, just in front of the extensive stables of the establishment. Everything about the place denoted a lofty tone and there might be seen within, as well as without, all that luxury of appointment which envelopes folks for whom circumstances or their own personal thrift have eliminated all anxiety as to their future welfare in material ways.

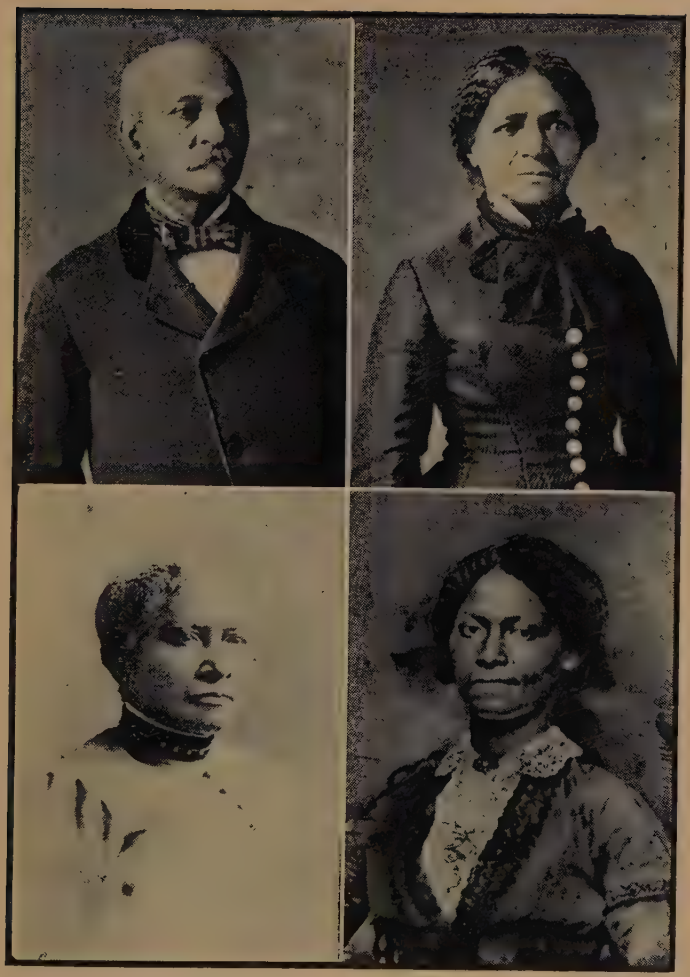
The owner and proprietor of this princely home was Horace Cammack, an Englishman by birth, but long a resident of the Crescent City. As a prosperous cotton merchant,

Cammack ranked with the foremost in the business marts on either side of the Atlantic, while in the social life of exclusive resident society the family was easily first and when at home dispensed without ostentation a hospitality that was as refined as it was generous. When Hamilton Edmonson was seeking to locate his sisters and brothers in desirable homes, he first saw Cammack, whose friendship and respect he had long since won, and who upon the further representation of Samuel's proficiency as a butler, agreed to invest one thousand dollars in his purchase. In this wise it came to pass that Samuel was duly installed as upper houseman in the Cammack home.

The liberal hospitality and social instincts of the head of the house, gave Samuel abundant opportunities for the display of his mastery of the art of polite service, for the standing rule that preparations for dinner should always be on the scale of the requirements of a dinner party, was rigidly insisted upon. After a few weeks' service, he was given complete control of all matters pertaining to the cuisine, doing the marketing and carrying a duplicate key to the immense wine cellar, in which there were seldom

stored less than five hundred cases of rare vintage.

During the whole of his service of nearly three years with this family, while recognizing the fact that few slaves were so happily placed as he, the major thought and ambition of his life was never lost to view. He was fully determined as ever, that the world should one day know and respect him as a free man, and he patiently waited and watched for the opportunity to accomplish his purpose. Meanwhile another element had thrust itself into the equation and must be reckoned with in the solution of the problem of his after life. It happened that Mrs. Cammack, a lady of much beauty and refinement, had in her employ as maid, a young girl of not more than eighteen years, named Delia Taylor. She was tall, graceful and winsome, of the clear mulatto type, and through long service near the person of her mistress, had absorbed those delicate graces of deportment and expression, which are the admiration and delight of those in like station and inspire a feeling much akin to reverence in those more lowly placed. Samuel had been but a little while within the circuit of so much attractiveness, when he



Samuel Edmonson
Evelyn Edmonson Ingraham

Delia Edmonson
Martha E. Pennington

was forced to acknowledge himself completely and willingly the devoted slave of pretty Delia, who, so far as he was able to judge, never so much as honored him with a glance from her coal black eyes. During this interval of doubt and perplexity, the question of escape and freedom and such kindred matters, were rarely considered. His position being that of an esteemed and valued servant, with none of the difficulties which adhere to the average slave, it is perhaps not strange that he should subordinate his future to an agony so absorbing as this passion for the pretty Delia.

The suspense of Samuel was not relieved until near the end of his second summer of service. The family had been spending the heated months at Biloxi and along towards the end of their stay, the fatal question was propounded the second time. A moonlight night, the dreamy calm of the romantic tropic clime and the end of an old log, are the elements which make up the situation, and seated here with the soothing cadences of old ocean sounding harmoniously in their ears, the spiritual union of two devoted souls is consummated.

The master and mistress were well

pleased, when in due course they were apprised of the affair and made smooth the way for the fulfillment of the desire of their servants. Matters now moved along on pleasant lines for Samuel and Delia during several months; but with the advent of Master Tom, the son of the house who had been away to college, was encountered an element of discord which was for a while to disrupt their happiness.

This young gentleman took a violent dislike to Samuel from the very first meal the latter served him. Whether or not he was sufficiently servile in the presence of so much "superiority" or that he was really lacking in the proper deference to his young master, does not appear, but the fact remains that this antipathy was signally manifest at their first meeting and grew apace as their acquaintance ripened. The crisis was reached on an evening when the young man was dining alone. Samuel had served the soup, which Master Tom touched with his thumb, and pushing it in disgust from him, said:

"This soup is cold, you lazy nigger, how dare you serve me in this way?"

"Nothing of the kind, can't you see for

yourself it's smoking?" was the equally earnest and indignant reply.

"Do you mean to tell me I lie, you dog?" was the query.

"I don't know what you call it," came the answer, "but the soup speaks for itself."

"Get out of this room this instant and I'll see that you're well thrashed for your insolence, too," came the angry retort.

Samuel was obediently making for the door, when glancing over his shoulder he saw Master Tom advancing towards him with clenched fists. He turned in time to avoid a blow aimed at his head and closing on his assailant, threw him easily to the floor, and then taking him by the shoulders, administered a lively shaking, after which Samuel quickly left the room. Hurrying to his quarters at the rear of the house, he collected a few belongings, including a purse of gold coin he had saved and quietly left the premises. Master Tom had meanwhile sent for an officer who arrived too late to be of service. Samuel knew that to return before the elder Cammack arrived in the city would be but to invite further and more serious trouble, so he wisely concluded to remain away.

On the third day he sent a letter to the office, apprising his master of what had occurred and stating that he would present himself in person the next morning. This he did and was permitted to give his version of the trouble. Cammack listened patiently throughout and at the conclusion of the story sent for an officer whom he told to keep Samuel at the station until he called for him. At the close of business on the same day the master drove to the station, gave orders for the release of Samuel, whom he told to go directly home and have dinner for four gentlemen served at eight o'clock.

The host with his guests arrived a few minutes before the hour and found everything complete for their comfort and entertainment. Before the dinner was served he took occasion to tell Samuel that his young master had joined the rest of the family out of town and that he wished him to conduct himself as though nothing had happened, as he desired the affair to be forgotten by all concerned.

The year following, Cammack went to Europe on cotton business and just before sailing for home was killed in a violent storm while yachting with friends off the coast of

Norway. After the announcement of this sad event, affairs in the life of Samuel gradually approached a crisis, while in the meantime an additional responsibility had been added to himself and Delia in the person of a healthy little infant, whom they named David. The anticipation of this had some time since made necessary the temporary retirement of the mother from the active service of her mistress.

Master Tom, being now the head of the house, left little room for doubt of the authority he had inherited and proceeded to evidence the same in no uncertain way, especially towards those against whom he held a grievance, fancied or otherwise. To get rid of Samuel was first in order, but this was the easiest possible matter, for there was not a wealthy family on the visiting list of the Cammacks who would not, even at some sacrifice, make a place for him in their service. Through the close intimacy of Mrs. Cammack and Mrs. Slidell, the latter was given the refusal and Samuel told to go round and see his future mistress.

On the way thither, the thought was impressed upon him, that a more opportune time could not be had for the accomplish-

ment of his freedom. However, he proceeded on his errand and to the kindly inquiry of his prospective mistress as to how he would like to live with her he gave it as his opinion that he should like such an arrangement very much.

He was determined now more than ever that his next owner should be himself, and after a brief visit at the home of his brother, during which he gathered fresh courage and inspiration from the fond love and dependence of his wife and little one, he proceeded directly to a friend from whom he purchased a set of free passes, which had been made out and sold him by a white man. These required that he should start immediately up the river, but upon a full consideration of the matter, he decided that the risks were too great in that direction and the chances greatly against his attaining his desires by this route. The problem was a serious one. An error of judgment, a step in the wrong direction, would not only be a serious, if not fatal blow to his hopes, but might lead to untold hardships to others most dear to him.

Somewhat irresolutely he turned his steps towards the river front, gazing with longing eyes at the stretch of water, the many ships

in harbor, some entering, others steaming away or being towed out to the open water; the thought that in this direction, beyond the wide seas lay his refuge and ultimate hope, came to him with so much force as to cause him to reel like one to whom a severe blow had been dealt. He stood for some time, seemingly bewildered, in the din and noise of the busy wharf, noting abstractedly the many bales of cotton as truck- after truck-load was rushed aboard an outward bound steamer. The bales seemed to fascinate him completely. A stevedore yelled at him to move out of the way and aroused him to action, but in the interval of serious thought an idea which seemed to offer a possible means of escape had been evolved. He would impersonate a merchant from the West Indies in search of a missing bale of goods and endeavor to get passage to the Islands, where he well knew the flag of England was abundant guarantee for his protection.

The main thought seemed a happy one, for he soon found a merchantman that was to clear that night for Jamaica. It was not a passenger vessel, but the Captain, a good-natured Briton, said that "he had an extra

bunk in the cabin and if the gentleman did not mind roughing it, he would be glad to have his company."

The first step towards his freedom was successfully taken, the money paid down for the passage, and with the injunction from the Captain to be aboard by nine o'clock, he returned ashore. Only a few hours now remained to him, and a long, perhaps a lasting separation from his dear wife and baby; and, thinking to pass these with them, he hurried thence by the most unfrequented route, but he had hardly crossed the threshold when Delia, weeping bitterly, implored him to make good his escape, as Master Tom had already sent the officers to look for him. With a last, fond, lingering embrace and a tear, which falling upon that cradled babe, meant present sorrow but not less future hope, the husband and father made his way, under the friendly shadows of night, back to the waiting ship.

When the officer from the Custom House came aboard to inspect the papers of the ship, Samuel was resting, apparently without concern in the upper bunk of the little cabin.

The Captain seated himself at the center

table opposite the officer and spread the papers before him.

"Heigho, I see you have a passenger this trip," was his remark and then reading from the sheet, "Samuel Edmonson, Jamaica, W. I. Thirty years old. Married. General Merchant."

"Yes," said the Captain as he concluded, "Mr. Edmonson asked for passage at the last moment, and as he was alone and there was a bunk not in service, I thought I'd take him along. He has a valuable bale of goods astray, probably at Jamaica and is anxious to return and look it up."

"Well, I hope he may find it. Where is he? Let's have a look at him."

"Mr. Edmonson, will you come this way a moment?" called the Captain.

As may be imagined the subject of this conversation had been listening intently, and now when it was demanded that he present himself, he murmured a fervent, "God help me," and jumped nimbly to the deck.

"This is my passenger," said the Captain, and to the former:

"The officer from the Custom House simply wished to see you, Mr. Edmonson."

Samuel bowed and stood at ease, resting

one hand upon the table and bore the searching look of the officer, which rested first upon his face and then descended to his hand, without the quiver of an eyelid or the flinching of a muscle. The flush of excitement, still mounting his cheek and brow, gave a bronzed swarthiness and decidedly un-American cast to his rich brown color, while his features, clean-cut and but slightly of the Negro type, with hand well shaped and nails quite clean, were a combination of conditions rarely met in the average slave.

The first glance of suspicion was almost immediately lost to view in the smile of friendly greeting with which the officer's hand was extended.

"I hope you may recover your goods," were the words he said, and rising added, "I must be off."

The Captain had meanwhile placed his liquor chest on the table and in a glass of good old Jamaica rum, a hearty "Bon-Voyage" and responsive "Good-wishes" were exchanged.

The subsequent story of Samuel, interesting and adventurous though it may be, scarcely comes within the scope of this story, so we hasten to follow after our other

friends who are returning northward. We may pause, however, to add for the satisfaction of our readers, that after a brief stay at Jamaica, Samuel sailed before the mast on an English schooner carrying a cargo of dye-wood to Liverpool. Two years were passed there in the service of a wealthy merchant whom he had served while a guest of his former master in New Orleans. During the third year he was joined by his wife and boy and subsequently the family took passage for Australia under the protection of a relative of his Liverpool employer, who was returning to extensive mining and sheep-raising interests, near the rapidly growing city of Melbourne.

CHAPTER XXI

THE RETURN NORTHWARD

After a voyage of more than two weeks, the brig *Union,* upon which the Edmonsons with a number of other slaves were re-embarked from New Orleans, arrived at Baltimore. The trip was anything but a pleasant one, for the living quarters of the slaves were exceedingly cramped, owing to the encroachments of an unusually large cargo of cotton and other stuffs. The care of the girls which had now devolved entirely upon Richard was faithfully looked after; he prepared their meals himself and zealously watched over them in storm and sunshine until the weary distance had been completed.

Richard was called for on the afternoon of their arrival at Baltimore by one Bigelow of Washington, who was to take him directly to his wife and children. This seemed a most cruel blow to the girls, for they had supposed they would all return to

Washington together; but they consoled themselves with the thought that some good agencies were successfully at work, since Richard's freedom had been accomplished and the happiness of his loved ones assured through their speedy reunion. And now once more the dreary monotony and oppressive routine of a slave prison is their portion, but with the difference that they must now alone endure the agony of mind, growing out of the terrible uncertainty which envelops their future, as well as the physical drudgery which is a part of their daily duty.

Shortly after their arrival at Baltimore, the father and eldest sister of the girls came over from Washington and spent a day and night with them at the prison. This brought them a great deal of consolation, as well as the assurance, that efforts were going forward to raise the money for their purchase. He sought to find out what was the lowest possible amount for which the girls might be bought and obtained the consent of the trader to wait two weeks before making further efforts to sell them.

The night passed with his daughters, Paul Edmonson declares to have been the most miserable of all his life. To sleep was im-

possible for either of them; and he, alone in a room, bare and uncomfortable, just over where the girls were weeping, passed the night restlessly wandering to and fro, groaning audibly and calling persistently upon the Lord to deliver his poor children out of the savage grasp of slavery. With the coming of the morning, his aching heart was made sadder, when brought into actual contact with the fearful indignities and inhumanities which were in constant evidence, hour by hour.

Paul returned to Washington more than ever determined to use every means to obtain their freedom. By diligent and earnest labor on the part of relatives and friends (and among the latter none did more valiant service, both by advice and actual soliciting for funds than their true friend and sympathizer, Paul Jennings) quite a goodly sum was raised as a nucleus for this purpose. Some weeks after this, through a dissolution of the partnership between Bruin and Hill and the Baltimore trader, the girls were again brought to Washington; but, without sufficient pause to permit of a visit from their relatives, they were hurried by carriage to Alexandria, where in their old

quarters, they again resumed the toil and discomforts of their former life at this place.

More than three months had now passed since the beginning of their itinerary of sorrow which had its inception on the Saturday night the *Pearl* made its ill-fated flight, an interval, short as time goes, but with its burden of heartache and agony of spirit it seemed to these poor children more than a cycle of years in which their spirit had been bound remorselessly and steeped in the lowest depths of woe and misery. Through it all, however, and despite the depression and bitter repinings engendered by such serious conditions, the simple faith of their childhood never wavered, and because of it over and beyond their present distress there brightly shone a ray of hope to strengthen their steps and brighten their darkened way.

In the old way and under the same auspices they took up the dreary round of uncongenial tasks by day; and by night, divided in affectionate confidences, with intervals of unrefreshing slumber, the heavy burden of their disconsolate hearts. Early in September, their father, urged ever onward to renewed efforts for their deliver-

ance, visited them again. A settled line of endeavor had been mapped out through insistent prayer and interchange of ideas with the devoted partner of all his griefs. He had determined with all his ignorance but wealth of paternal love and Christian fortitude, to lay siege to the purse and heart of those at the North, whom he had heard spoken of as liberal and given to hearken to the misfortunes of the unhappy bondman.

He had appealed to Bruin and secured the following statement of the conditions upon which the freedom of his children might be secured:

"Alexandria, Va.,
"Sept. 5, 1848.

"The bearer, Paul Edmonson, is the father of two girls, Mary Jane and Emily Catharine Edmonson. These girls have been purchased by us, and once sent South; and, upon the positive assurance that the money for them would be raised if they were brought back, they were returned. Nothing, it appears has as yet been done in this respect by those who promised, and we are on the very eve of sending them South the second time; and we are candid in saying that, if they go again, we will not regard any promises made in relation to them. The father wishes to

raise money to pay for them; and intends to appeal to the liberality of the humane and the good to aid him, and has requested us to state in writing the conditions upon which we will sell his daughters.

We expect to start our servants to the South in a few days; if the sum of twelve hundred ($1200) dollars be raised and paid us in fifteen days, or we be assured of that sum, then we will retain them for twenty-five days more, to give an opportunity for the raising of the other thousand and fifty ($1050) dollars; otherwise we shall be compelled to send them along with our other servants.

"Bruin & Hill"

The days and weeks which followed were filled with suspense and disappointment, for the traders were again growing restless and already arrangements were going forward to send a gang of slaves to the southern market—this time to South Carolina. No word of encouragement had come to the girls from any source, so that now, indeed, were they very near the still, dark waters of despondency, for they realized, if they started again on that dreadful mission, there could be no possible escape.

The traders were now impatient and fully

aroused to a sense of the risks incurred, in holding them so long a time, and so were determined to make a decided move towards realizing on their investment. The night before the dreaded morning on which the gang was to start, at length arrived. Daybreak was the appointed hour. The little daughter of Bruin, who had conceived a great fondness for the sisters, entreated that she be allowed to bid them "Good-by" before she retired for the night, and so had made her way to their miserable quarters. The feeble rays of a tallow dip but served to intensify the dark shadows which seem to hover in each nook and corner of the desolate room. The attitude of the three occupants, though young and healthful, is such as to heighten rather than relieve the melancholy effect. Kisses and tears and groans are freely mingled in a burst of natural feeling, which must find its true expression everywhere and with all peoples through channels universally the same.

It were difficult to say which of the two, so differently placed, was the more affected; the petted offspring, to whom circumstance had made secure liberty and the affectionate regard of relatives and friends, or those two

JOHN S. BRENT AND HIS CHILDREN

Corporal in a Mass. regiment during the Civil War, he visited Hamilton Edmonson (Taylor) at New Orleans when mustered out in 1865. He was the first colored man appointed to the fire department of the District of Columbia.

dark-skinned unfortunates, on whom the baneful shadow of caste and the curse of slavery bore so heavily.

Emily sat with the little girl upon her lap, while Mary kneeled by their side, and held one little white and delicate hand in both of hers. She begged them not to go away as she would be so lonely without them and urged if they loved her, they would not be so cruel.

"It is not we, who wish to go," said Emily in a voice nearly stifled with emotion. "It is our dearest wish to remain where we may be near our friends, for if we are sent away this time, we are lost and God alone knows what may become of us. Your father can keep us here if he will, but I am afraid he is determined to send us to the South."

The little one jumped from her perch on the elder girl's lap and passionately exclaimed in a voice almost hysterical:

"You sha'n't go! You sha'n't go! I'll see Papa! He's cruel! He's cruel!" with which she rushed from the room.

After this exciting interview with their little friend, Mary broke down completely and abandoned herself to the most passionate wailing. Emily subdued her own

infinite misery in the presence of the uncontrolled grief of her sister and attempted in every possible way to comfort her; but alas! the tides of misfortune and sorrow seemed to sweep away every barrier and in a perfect deluge of weeping, to hurry the unhappy girl towards the swift rapids of despair.

A little later, Bruin, himself, came to the girls' quarters and was immediately seized upon by both in a last appeal, to be allowed to remain behind. When he was about to leave, Mary threw herself on her knees before him, begging piteously that he think of his own little girl and make the question of so cruel and fatal a separation, a near and personal one. What if she were torn away from those she loved and doomed like them to a life of sorrow in a strange land?

This appeal, so earnest and pathetic, seemed to touch Bruin deeply and with tearful visage and promising to see what could be done, he left them, wretched and alone, to struggle through the dreary vigil of the night.

Before dawn, the next morning, the busy scene about the traders pen gave notice that another link in the sad destiny of a number of human lives was being forged under the

protecting ægis of the nefarious American institution of slavery. With something of military precision the gang was mustered, two and two, the men leading and the women and children bringing up the rear on either side of a chain attached to the wrists of each pair and running through to the end of the line. The music of fiddle and banjo, a necessary adjunct to this tragic ceremony, floats through the air and furnishes the inspiration for nimble action in this trek to unknown parts.

Mary and Emily, abandoning themselves to a fate which seemed inevitable, weary and on the verge of collapse, awaited with fear and trembling the dread summons to join the gang. Looking forth from the little window of their quarters, Emily saw the line move forward, but doubting that this was really so (for how could it be without them) she rubbed her swollen eyes and eagerly pressed her face against the pane. It is indeed true, for the last of the line is even now moving through the outer gates. A piercing scream thrills throughout the old building and causes Mary to leap from the corner in which she has been crouching,

while the words of her sister, "Thank the good Lord, Mary, we are saved" fall faintly but soothingly upon her ear as she lapses into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XXII

FREE AT LAST

PAUL EDMONSON took the papers given him by Bruin, and a few days after boarded the train for New York. The fact that he had never been there, knew nobody in all that large city, together with his own ignorance of letters, as well as pronounced physical infirmities, were neither or all sufficient to deter him from his purpose. Alone and worst of all, bearing in face and feature the imprint of a despised and outcast race, he only realized the fearful task he had set himself to do, when early in the afternoon of September 12 he was assisted from the cars by some white gentlemen who had interested themselves in him on the train, and he found himself in that modern whirlpool of noisy, busy life.

Through the kindness of these gentlemen he was directed to the offices of the Anti-Slavery Society, where he was warmly welcomed, permitted to state his case, and was

much encouraged by the kindly consideration shown. The paper given him by Bruin was examined with keen interest, but the sum named was so large and the daily demands upon the funds of the Society so great, that he was told that the needed assistance could not be immediately promised, but that the matter would be taken under advisement and all that was possible would be done. Before leaving the rooms of the Society it was suggested to him that he make his case known to the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, who was already famous as the aggressive champion of universal freedom and expounder of that Christianity which would extend its benefits to all mankind, regardless of color or condition.

It was at the close of the business day, when the artisan and clerk, as well the employer, relieved of the grind of duty, were returning to their homes, that the old gentleman reached the steps of Mr. Beecher's residence. Hungry, weak and footsore, he could go no further and thereon seated himself to await returning strength. It was here he was discovered by the Pastor of the "Tabernacle," who himself helped him into the house and, like the true Samaritan, min-

istered unto his wants, he and all his household.

A public meeting was to be held at the "Tabernacle" that evening, and while it was in progress, the father, with the burden of his children's salvation lying so heavily upon his heart was presented to the audience. The story of the journey of the girls to the South, their unexpected—nay, Providential return and present position of jeopardy, were all eloquently detailed by Mr. Beecher. It was but a little while before a responsive enthusiasm was developed and there, on the pulpit of that notable place of worship, he set up an imaginary auction for the purchase of the freedom of these two Christian slave girls.

In writing of this altogether unique event, an eyewitness says: "I think that of all the meetings I have attended in my life I never saw one that surpassed that." More than $2,200 was subscribed in less than half an hour.

Here indeed was Christian zeal, fearless and unequivocal, and with many other acts of similar character will ever shine resplendent of the glory and honor of the Savior of mankind. How pitiable by contrast, how

unworthy of the name of "follower of the meek and lowly Nazarene" must ever appear that body of men who about this time were gathered together under the style of the Georgia Annual Conference, to voice this remarkable makeshift and apology in a resolution: "That slavery as it exists in the United States, is not a moral evil." All honor to Henry Ward Beecher and those other conscientious ministers of Christ, who in that dire conflict, invited the odium of small and prejudiced souls by insisting that individual, corporeal sovereignty, complete and absolute, should go hand in hand with that higher, spiritual freedom, wherewith the gracious King of all the Earth hath clothed each of the children of men.

Paul Edmonson returned the next day to Washington accompanied by a gentleman designated at the meeting to look after the payment of the money and to see that the Edmonsons were fairly treated in the transaction. They proceeded directly to Alexandria and were hastening towards Bruin's place, when Emily and Mary, looking from the window of the room in which they were at work, recognized their father and rushed wildly into the street.

Bruin thought the girls had become crazed through brooding over their troubles and the apprehension of still further sorrows, and following in their steps, was agreeably surprised to find them clasped in the embrace of their father. A few moments more and the three men were seated in Bruin's office, the signatures were attached to the necessary papers, the money paid over and the transaction completed.

The little daughter of Bruin, seemingly happier than all the rest, shouts the glad message of Freedom, as she hurries to the room where the girls are now waiting with feverish expectancy. Clasping a hand of each, she cries in joyous tones, "You're free at last! You're free at last!" and therewith hastened with them into the presence of their father.

A glance into the face of either of the three men is sufficient to assure them that this is indeed true, for even the stern crust of Bruin's cupidity is completely shattered under the genial warmth of this thrice welcome felicity, while every wrinkle in brow and cheek and each radiant gleam from the eyes of Paul was a joyous token of happiness newly found. Bruin was not content in

showing his pleasure in this way alone, but called all the family to bid the girls good-by, and with many expressions of goodwill and satisfaction in the happy termination of events, himself bestowed upon each a bright gold coin as evidence of his kindly feeling.

In such manner was there presented another proof of the efficacy of that one touch of nature which makes the whole world kin; for after all, the joys and sorrows, the misfortunes and happinesses of life are not peculiar to race, color or condition, but are alike the heritage of human kind. The tears and anguish of a soul finds not only its echo, but begets an impulse to dry the one and soften the other, in all who have eyes to behold, regardless of who or what the unfortunate is.

While this sentiment is instinct in man, and it is as strong as any principle of his nature, there can be no real ground for fear that the era of discrimination and small and narrow practices which involve the question of human rights, will not give way before the beneficent principles of justice and moral right. As a type of the old slave trader, Bruin was doubtless far in advance of the majority of his class in matters of

manly principle and integrity. He was, however, only human like the rest; and although there was within him that irrepressible monitor, an enlightened Christian conscience (for he claimed kinship with the Prince of Peace) he felt it to be more sensible and seemingly more profitable to ride easily along with the current than to risk destruction by attempting to arrest its flow.

It is easily credible, therefore, that the man was genuinely glad to be happily rid of such troublesome slaves as the Edmonson girls, while it is equally certain that he lost but little time in seeking an investment of like character for the placing of the fund derived from their sale. The highest authorities on Christian ethics in the land had justified the slave traffic, and not only so, but were in many instances its direct beneficiaries and the recipient of its profits; how is it possible, then, that those lesser lights of the faith should be expected to occupy higher ground and develop sentiments more in accord with the life and teachings of their Divine Preceptor?

The ways and means of adjustment of this the greatest question ever before the American people were now already in process of

formation, and very soon the procession of events leads to the point whence the outlook is indeed gloomy for the wellbeing of the nation. The withdrawal of the Southern Congressmen and the speedy formation of the Confederate States, is the keystone, shaped in conspiracy and traitorously set in the frowning arch of rebellion. The election of Lincoln to the presidency supplied the element of rugged manliness, that brooked no compromise and which was so necessary in dealing with such grave emergencies. The Power which holds in keeping the destinies of races as well as individuals, made the "Existence of the Union" and "Liberty for the Slave" entirely dependent one upon the other.

The lines of division are clearly drawn. The fruitful era of the political acrobat had not yet come. "Union and Liberty," "Dismemberment and Slavery," was the fated Shibboleth, changeless and unalterable. The gravity of the situation was speedily manifest and the illusionary "Peace in Sixty Days" was developed into the most protracted and bloody of civil wars.

The controlling desire of Lincoln to preserve the Union at any cost is responsible

for the provisionary Proclamation of Emancipation, issued September 22, 1862, and together with the policy of mustering colored men into the Army of the Union, though tardily resorted to as a measure of defense, are necessarily the basis upon which has been built the subsequent development of the race. The memorable flight of the fugitives of the *Pearl,* and the hoisting of the American Flag over Fort Sumter are both the symbols of the time in which the contention between liberty and slavery occupied the arena of the world's most critical struggle. The mighty forces arrayed in opposition in legislative halls, in pulpits, through press and forum, contributed each its best effort to the triumph of the one and defeat of the other.

The story of this era with its elements of tragedy and pathos marking the supreme effort to bestow the blessings of liberty upon the despised descendants of the African slaves is not complete that does not illumine its pages with the testimonials of the racial character of these people: their simple faith and trustfulness, their unreserved devotion and fidelity, their cheerful spirit and fortitude in suffering and distress; their courage

unflinching, and bravery unsurpassed, and withal, a patriotism whose healthy flame glows with unremittent fervor on the sacred altar of their noblest and best ideals.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FAMILY REUNION

So impatient were the girls to reach Washington that they could not be persuaded to wait for the train some hours later, but prevailed upon their father, who was no less eager than they, to permit them to indulge a first extravagance; and so with one of the coins which had inaugurated their freedom, a carriage drawn by a pair of horses was secured, and immediately the start was made. It was nearly nine o'clock, when a clatter of hoofs and noise of rumbling wheels, broke the usual evening stillness of Washington's West End section.

There was not the sound of the ominous fire bells to excite the anxious householder, but with that prescience which seems an essential part of the human being, a feeling that something out of the ordinary had happened was aroused, perhaps from the trailing cloud of dust; and as if by magic, windows flew up and doors swung open all along

the route. When the horses were at length pulled up before the residence of "Father" Brent, a stream of light poured forth from the doorway almost at the same instant. Mirrored therein and peering forth with eager expectation there might be seen an interesting group, charmingly silhouetted between the shadows of night and the immediate background of comfort, light and cheer. There were the girls' parents, Paul and Milly, their sister Lizzie and brother-in-law, "Father Brent," with a number of little Brents, all of whom had heard the first rumble of the distant wheels, which in some strange, unaccountable way made each heart beat faster and still faster, until to their infinite joy, the sound had died away before their very door.

A moment more and two girlish forms leap lightly from the carriage and hasten towards the group which advances to meet them, and there amid the calm of nature's eventide, with no frown more serious than that of little Katie, who finds the big folk in the way of the welcome she wishes to extend her aunts; in the presence of relatives and friends, who seem to have come up out of the ground for the occasion, a joyful reunion

is had after the homely, though infallible formula of good old Mother Nature—

> Embraces, kisses and tears, the three should be
> Mixed in equal parts without formality.

The dear mother, with an arm around each of her new-found children, returns with them into the house, giving utterance to words of praise and thankfulness at each step of the way.

The little home of the Brents, simply and inexpensively furnished, yet lacking nothing of that atmosphere of comfort and hospitality that should hover about a happy fireside, was fully taxed until long past midnight, through the coming of friends who wished to rejoice with the household over their good fortune and happiness. Light refreshments were hastily provided, for as "Father" Brent said to his good wife when the matter was suggested, " 'twont 'pear like nothin' ef we don' gib 'em er swaller an' er bite uv suppin."

At length the last, lingering friends have departed, leaving the family alone to rejoice over the return of its dear ones; they gather —mother, father, sisters and brothers about

the cheerful fireplace. Emily and Mary, their faces bright with the sunshine of happiness, and resting at last secure in the freedom which has been purchased after so much weeping, heartache, and suffering, recount the varied phases of their interesting, though terrible experiences. Their words are often indignant and justly harsh at some parts of the narrative, but with a deprecating gesture or the apt quotation of some scriptural text the pious mother would seek to check the flow of bitterness and lead them with grateful hearts to a contemplation of their present happiness.[1]

"Never mind, 'Honeys,' " came the words with loving accent, "that's all past and gone. Think only of the good, kind Master what's brought you through all dese tribulations,

1 "The fame of the Edmonson children through the incident of the *Pearl* was wide indeed, and after the Brooklyn meeting many suggestions had been made looking to their education and further benefit. The movement for the education of Emily and Mary was crystallized into a definite proposition and funds were made available for their matriculation at Oberlin.

After a restful stay with their family at Washington they were sent to Oberlin. Mary, however, who was delicate was unable to overcome the effects of the exposure encountered in the slave-prisons at Alexandria and died during her first year at the school. Emily, grief stricken, had not the heart to go on and returned to Washington.

Miss Myrtilla Miner had already established her school for girls and had moved to a new location at about what is now the square bounded by 19th, 20th, N and O Streets. Here after returning from New York, Emily assisted Miss

an' made yer free an' happy by de grace ob ow blessed Lord and Savior."

"But they do so many cruel things to the poor slaves and it has lasted so long, don't you think somebody ought to suffer for it, mother?" asked Emily in mild though resentful tones.

"There'll be plenty ob sufferin' by an' by, my dear, an' 'twont be only de po' slave neder, cause dis slav'ry bus'ness is like er two edge sword an' dem as has ben doin' de cuttin' wil be s'prised ter fin' out how bad dey demsel's ben cut. But hows'ever it's all wid de Lord, an' he's said 'Vengeance is mine. I will repay.'"

The night waned and its somber shadows were already retreating before the dawn of another day, ere the thought of rest and slumber was permitted to obtrude. The family kneeled with one accord and the burden of the blended evening and morning prayer, which on bended knee the happy father made, was that the gracious Spirit

Miner in the school and it was in one of the little cabins on this place that the Edmonson family established their home after moving in from the country. Miss Miner, speaking of the establishment of her school says, "Emily and I lived here alone, unprotected except by God, the rowdies occasionally stoning the house at evening and we nightly retired in the expectation that the house would be fired before morning. Emily and I have been practicing shooting with a pistol."

might still guide and sustain his children through the ordeals which were yet to come to them in their effort to win that higher freedom, that real and tangible liberty which is the birthright and should be the privilege of each and every American!

FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL

Descendants of Paul and Amelia Edmonson

FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL

Descendants of Paul and Amelia Edmonson

Children	*Grandchildren*	*Great-grandchildren*	*Great-great-grandchildren*	*Great-great-great-grandchildren*
1 Hamilton Edmonson				
2 Elizabeth Edmonson *m.* John Brent	1 Catharine Brent *m.* Jas. H. Paynter	1 John H. Paynter *m.* Minnie H. Pillow	1 Verden T. Paynter 2 Brent Paynter 3 Wm. Cary Paynter	
		2 Minerva Paynter		
	2 Martha Brent *m.* Wm. H. Bell	1 Claude De Witt Bell		
		2 Adelbert Bell *m.* 1 ——; 2 ——	1 Marie Bell *m.* Daniel A'Hearn 2 Albertine Bell	
	3 Amelia Brent *m.* Garrett Smith Wormley	1 James Wormley *m.* 1 Lena Champ; 2 Emma Davis		
		2 Garrett Wormley *m.* 1 Rebecca Webster; 2 Cora Nickens; 3 Emily ——	1 Amelia Wormley 2 Julian Wormley	
		3 C. Sumner Wormley		
		4 Edith Wormley *m.* Harry S. Minton		
		5 Smith Wormley *m.* Mamie Cheatham	1 Lowell Wormley 2 Edith Wormley 3 Mavis Wormley	
		6 Clem Wormley *m.* Docia Swann	1 Swann Leon Wormley 2 Clementine Wormley	
		7 Roscoe C. Wormley *m.* Beatrice Nalle	1 Sumner Wormley 2 Roscoe Wormley	
		8 Leon Wormley *m.* Marjorie Anderson	1 Marjorie Wormley	

	9 Alice Wormley *m.* John Francis	1 Genevieve *m.* Chas. I. West	
		2 John	
	1 Corinne Freeman	3 Betty	
	2 Olive Freeman	4 Minton	
	3 Fred Dent Freeman *m.* Lucy Stannard	1 Reginald Freeman *m.* Mary Williams	1 Charlotte Freeman
			2 George Freeman
			3 Norma Freeman
4 Emily Brent *m.* Wm. L. Freeman			
5 Jno. S. Brent *m.* 1 Margaret ——; 2 Rebecca ——	1 Ellsworth Brent *m.* Jennie Howard	1 Muriel Scott	
	2 Marion Brent *m.* Douglas M. Scott		
	3 Julia Brent		
	4 Edna Brent *m.* 1 Wm. L. Carson; 2 Otto L. Singleton	1 Whittle Brent Carson	
6 Rebecca Brent *m.* John Wright	1 Ella Wright *m.* Jas. H. Payne		
	2 Ira Wright *m.* Ruth Taylor		
	3 Marie Wright *m.* Robt. E. Syphax	1 Francis Ennis Syphax	
		2 Robt. E. Syphax	
7 Calvin Brent *m.* 1 Albertine Jones; 2 Orelia Brown	1 Marguerite Brent		
	2 Ethel Brent		
	3 Ralph Brent *m.* Lula Turner		
	4 Alfred Paul Brent *m.* 1 Landonia Childs; 2 Lossie Cromwell	1 Janice Brent	
	5 Clarence Brent *m.* Anna Tucker	1 Calvin Brent	
		2 Claudia Brent	

FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL—*Continued*

Descendants of Paul and Amelia Edmonson

Children	*Grandchildren*	*Great-grandchildren*	*Great-great-grandchildren*	*Great-great-great-grandchildren*
		6 Ernestine Brent *m.* Albion Paul Edmonson	1 Evelyn Edmonson	
		7 John Brent *m.* Neeton Cook		
3 Ephraim Edmonson *m.* Mary Bannister	8 Wm. Brent			
	1 Narcissa Edmonson *m.* 1 Geo. Tossett; 2 —— Massey	1 —— Edmonson		
	2 Oliver Edmonson *m.* —— ——			
	3 Maria Edmonson *m.* Ray Horsford			
	4 Walter Edmonson			
4 Richard Edmonson *m.* Martha ——	1 Sophoenia Edmonson *m.* —— Fairfax			
	2 Sallie Edmonson *m.* Benj. Freeman	1 Wm. Freeman *m.* Katie Howard		
		2 Geo. Freeman *m.* Laura Layton	1 Laurena Belle Freeman *m.* Jesse Lewis	
			2 Nellie Louise Freeman	
			3 Raymond Benj. Freeman *m.* Pearl Timberlake	1 Reginald Freeman

5 Martha Edmonson *m.* 1 Ed. Young; 2 Levi Pennington	1 Edward Young *m.* Josephine Johnson	1 Walter Young *m.* Belle Stevens	1 Dorothy Maxwell Young *m.* Governor C. Barrett	1 Gwendolyn Barrett 2 Alice Barrett 3 Governor Barrett
			2 Alex. Helene Young	
			3 Elizabeth M. Young *m.* Ralph Jackson	1 Clyde Young Jackson 2 Francis Jackson
			4 Edward Owen Young *m.* Ethel Davis	1 Sylvia Young 2 Gene Young 3 Elsie Young 4 Edward Young
		2 Mollie Young *m.* Chas. E. Thomas		
6 Eveline Edmonson *m.* W. B. Ingram	1 Julia Ingram *m.* Joseph Becket	1 —— ——		
	2 Martha Ingram *m.* Mason Coxton	1 Wm. Coxton 2 Fred Coxton 3 Mason Coxton 4 Joseph Coxton 5 Mary Coxton 6 Julia Coxton		
		7 Eva Coxton *m.* Aaron Seward	1 Carl Seward	
	3 Eveline Ingram *m.* Wm. H. Johnson	1 Marie Johnson *m.* John H. Mosely		
			1 Geraldine Marie Johnson 2 Elaine Johnson 3 Wm. Jas. Johnson	
	4 Wm. Ingram *m.* ——			
	5 Joseph Ingram			
7 Sam'l Edmonson *m.* Delia Taylor	1 David Edmonson 2 Amelia Edmonson			

FUGITIVES OF THE PEARL—*Continued*

DESCENDANTS OF PAUL AND AMELIA EDMONSON

Children	*Grandchildren*	*Great-grandchildren*	*Great-great-grandchildren*	*Great-great-great-grandchildren*
	3 Robt. W. Edmonson *m.* Evie Bastien	1 Albion Paul Edmonson *m.* Ernestine Brent	1 Evelyn Edmonson	
		2 Adelia Edmonson *m.* Russell Smalley	1 Dorothy Smalley 2 Russell Smalley, Jr. 3 Ralph Smalley	
		3 Hugh Edmonson *m.* Bessie Lowry		
8 Emily Edmonson *m.* Larkin Johnson	1 Ida Johnson *m.* James Berry	1 Irene Berry *m.* Wm. Butler	1 Pauline Berry Butler *m.* Chas. Ash 2 Aloysius Berry Butler	
		2 Annita Berry *m.* Van Vranken S. Matthews		
		3 Wallace Berry *m.* —— ——	1 Junior Berry 2 Benj. Berry 3 Marion Berry 4 Brice Berry	
		4 Clarence Thaddeus Berry *m.* Della ——	1 Alice Berry 2 Pauline Berry 3 Clarence Berry 4 Robert Berry 5 Isabel Berry	
	2 Fannie Johnson *m.* Rezin H. Shipley	1 Cecilia Shipley *m.* 2 Earl Shipley	1 —— ——	

	3 Emma Johnson *m.* Wallace Chapman	1 Bernard Chapman *m.* Margaret Diggs		
		2 Garrett Chapman *m.* Leila M. Shumate	1 Joseph Chapman 2 Robert Chapman	
	4 Robt. Johnson *m.* May Chatman			
		1 Larkin Johnson 2 Wendell Johnson 3 Roland Johnson 4 Eunice Johnson		
9 Henrietta Edmonson 10 John Edmonson 11 Eliza Edmonson *m.* Dennis Orme	1 Samuel Orme *m.* Ellen Barber			
		1 Martina Orme 2 Dennis Orme 3 Wm. W. Orme 4 Roscoe Orme *m.* Amy Thompson	1 Amy Orme 2 Roscoe Orme 3 Genevieve Orme	
12 Mary Edmonson 13 Jos. Edmonson *m.* Alice Payne 14 Louisa Rebecca Edmonson *m.* Gilbert L. Joy		5 Rosetta Orme *m.* Geo. A. Robinson		
	1 Annita L. Joy *m.* Wm. A. Clark			
	2 Lula Joy *m.* Arthur Brooks			
	3 Gilbert L. Joy *m.* Margaret Jones	1 Corelli Dancy Joy 2 Margaret Joy		

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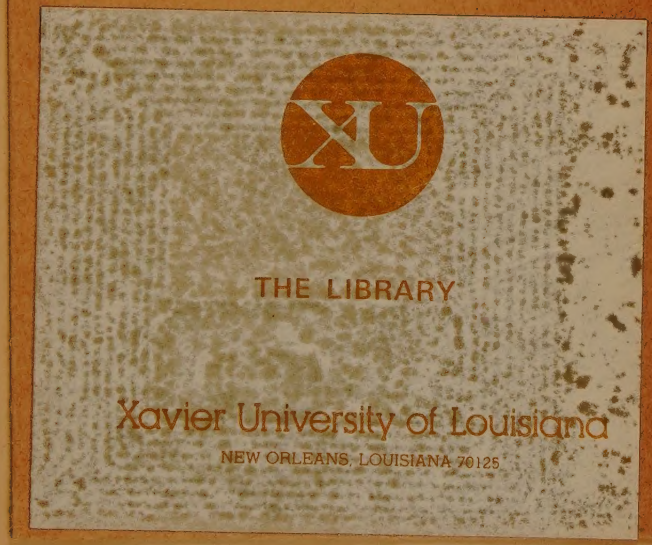

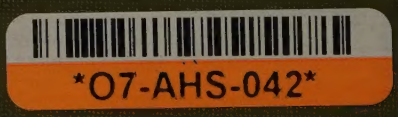
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